



Bar Council Equality and Diversity Guides

Effective communication with those who are deaf or hard of hearing

People may be born deaf or become deaf traumatically or as a result of ageing.

REMEMBER the useful acronym GALA 'Greet - Ask - Listen - Act' when dealing with people with hearing difficulties

The following suggestions are designed to help improve communication with clients and colleagues that are either deaf or hard of hearing.

TIPS

1. Face your client or colleague and draw their attention before commencing.
2. Check any auditory enhancement systems requested are working before the meeting.
3. Enforce the 'one speaker/one meeting' principle and make sure only one person speaks at a time. Remember someone who is lip-reading needs to know which person is speaking.
4. Take lots of breaks – lip reading takes a lot of concentration.
5. Check that where you are sitting enables lip-reading to take place.
6. Prevent distracting background noise that can affect hearing aids.
7. Avoid shouting or talking loudly to your client or colleague as this appears aggressive and can be distressing.
8. Recognise body language can be perceived as aggressive.
9. Don't talk too slowly as this affects sound rhythms for those with a hearing impairment.
10. Avoid distractions that may cause your client or colleague to lose concentration.
11. Always repeat information if you need/have to turn your face away from your client or colleague – don't be afraid to write things down if this helps you to check they have understood your point.
12. Ensure that those who can/choose to lip read have captured all sounds such as 'n' and 'g'
13. Understand that many deaf people have tinnitus which can be distracting.
14. Frequently check that your client or colleague really understands what you have said as they could incorrectly indicate they have understood in order to speed up the discussions or because they are embarrassed or distressed.
15. Be patient so that your client/colleague does not become anxious

16. Be aware that some deaf people take medication that can affect their concentration

Supplementary information with respect to the courts

TIPS

1. Ensure in advance that the Court is aware of your client or colleague's hearing impairment/deafness and their communication needs.
2. Check if there is an induction loop or infra-red broadcast system at the court and that it is in working order.
3. Request that background noise (e.g. as air-conditioning) be limited as this can impair hearing.
4. Ensure microphones are made available and are working.

For further information you can contact Action on Hearing Loss. They can advise on the best loop and hearing enhancement systems as well as infrared systems that work with advanced hearing aids.

Action on Hearing Loss Information Line:

- ❖ Telephone 0808 808 0123
- ❖ Text phone 0808 808 9000
- ❖ SMS 0780 0000 360
- ❖ informationline@hearingloss.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss Tinnitus Information Line:

- ❖ Telephone 0808 808 6666
- ❖ Text phone 0808 808 0007
- ❖ SMS 0780 0000 360
- ❖ tinnitushelpline@hearingloss.org.uk

The equality officers at the Bar Council can offer advice or ask advocates who share or have an expertise in a particular disability for their assistance. Please contact: EOOs@barcouncil.org.uk

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