

Interviewing Deaf or hard of hearing people

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers are required to provide reasonable adjustments to ensure that candidates who are deaf or have hearing loss are not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to candidates who are hearing.

It can be daunting to recruit a person with hearing loss if you have never done so before. There may be concerns about communication, the support the person might need, or health and safety in the workplace.

It is important to understand that hearing loss covers a broad range of people whose needs can vary widely, as this may depend on the type or level of hearing loss. A person who is profoundly deaf could use British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate and will need different support from a person who uses hearing aids and verbal communication. They, again, will have different needs from a person with mild hearing loss who does not need to use hearing aids.

Every person who is deaf or has hearing loss is different, so always ask what adjustments – if any – they need.

Preparing for the interview

If a shortlisted candidate indicates that they require communication support of any kind at interview, this may be funded through the Access to Work scheme, which the potential employee applies for. Providing the right kind of communication support as specified by the candidate will ensure that they have a fair interview and that the employer can fully explore their potential.

The following should ensure employers get the best from all candidates:

- Find a location with good lighting and that is quiet.
- Inform the receptionist that you are expecting a deaf or hard-of-hearing candidate.
- Establish whether candidates require communication support and if so what type. Under the Equality Act it is the responsibility of the potential employer to liaise with the candidate and establish what adjustments and support they need. Managers must make sure the applicant knows what to expect on the day, so they can let you know whether adjustments are needed. For example, let them know whether a group exercise, written test or presentation is provided.
- Demand for communication professionals is extremely high, so they need to be booked well in advance. Ensure that the communication professional or video interpreting services are booked with enough time to spend around 15 minutes with the candidate and the interview panel before the interview starts. This will allow both the interview panel and the candidate enough time to become familiar with working alongside a communication professional. You can book interpreters via Communication Unlimited bookings@cu-bsl.co.uk or tel 01332 369920.
- Prepare the questions you are going to ask the candidate, and give them a written copy at the beginning of the interview.
- Check with the candidate, or communication professional, that the room is arranged appropriately. For example, if the candidate is a lipreader, they will need to face the interviewer.
- Ensure the room is adequately lit to enable lipreading. The candidate should not be facing a window, as this puts the interviewer's face in shadow.
- If the candidate requires a loop system, please consider this when booking an interview room. Alternatively, you can book a mobile device called a soundfield, via John Cowings, the Senior Equalities Officer.

Interviewing without an interpreter

- Provide a written copy of the interview questions to the interviewee at the beginning of the interview, not prior to it commencing. Give the candidate a few minutes to read through the questions before you start asking your questions.
- Always gain the candidates attention before talking. Only one person ask a question and if multiple people are on the interviewing panel, point to the next person asking a question so the candidate doesn't miss anything.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Use gestures and facial expressions.
- Maintain eye contact by looking directly at the person.
- Encourage the deaf individual to let you know if your communication is unclear.
- Rephrase questions if necessary.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Ask the candidate to demonstrate their skills during the interview by operating a piece of equipment or software application, etc.
- Resist putting your hands on or near your mouth as you speak.
- Use short sentences and short words. Find another way to word your question if the candidate doesn't understand it. Rephrase and don't use Jargon or acronyms.
- Keep a pen and paper ready. If the applicant doesn't understand your question, providing a written version can be helpful.
- Do not shout, but speak clearly and naturally.
- Focus on the candidate's abilities, not their hearing loss.
- Don't speak extremely slowly or over-pronounce words. Doing this can make it difficult for lip readers to identify words.

Interviewing with Interpreters

- Ask the candidate what type of interpreting services they will require if your company will provide the interpreter.
- Ask the candidate and interpreter if lighting levels in the room are acceptable. It can be difficult for candidates to understand sign language if the room is dimly lighted.
- Bring extra chairs into the room to allow the interpreter to sit, if they prefer. Position the interpreter next to the interviewer so the candidate can easily see both individuals. Address your questions directly to the candidate, not the interpreter.
- If you're using a sign language interpreter, remember to address questions to the candidate, not their interpreter.

Note: If you are booking a sign language interpreter, to ensure quality, you must book either SignLive (for on-line interpreting) or Communication Unlimited for face to face interpreting. If you are booking a speech-to-text typist, then these are available on Orderpoint. All costs relating to extra support at interviews can be paid for via the Access to Work fund which the candidate needs to apply for. Alternatively some central monies are available via Occupational Health under the Corporate Access Fund.

Tip

- Make a rule that only one person may speak at a time during the interview if you plan to have more than one interviewer in the room. Gesture toward the other interviewer to let the candidate know when this person will ask a question.

Can I ask the candidate about their hearing loss at interview?

Under the Equality Act 2010, you can't ask someone about their hearing loss at the interview. You should ask the applicant about their abilities to do the job, not about whether their hearing loss will mean they can't do it. Keep in mind that, with support, hearing loss needn't be a barrier to people carrying out most jobs.

11 communication tips...



The infographic consists of two rows of tips, each with an icon and a text box. The background is dark blue with white icons and text.

- Tip 1:** Icon: A person wearing a hearing aid. Text: "Always ask: even if someone's using a hearing aid, ask if they need to lipread you."
- Tip 2:** Icon: A person with one hand raised. Text: "Make sure you have the person's attention before you start speaking."
- Tip 3:** Icon: Two people's heads in profile, one speaking. Text: "Turn your face towards the person you're speaking to, so they can see your lip movements."
- Tip 4:** Icon: A pair of lips. Text: "Speak clearly, not too slowly, and use normal lip movements, facial expressions and gestures."
- Tip 5:** Icon: An exclamation mark. Text: "Get to the point: use plain language and don't waffle."
- Tip 6:** Icon: A hand covering a mouth. Text: "Don't cover your mouth when speaking."
- Tip 7:** Icon: A question mark. Text: "Make sure what you're saying is being understood."
- Tip 8:** Icon: Two speech bubbles, one with a question mark. Text: "If someone doesn't understand what you've said, try saying it in a different way."
- Tip 9:** Icon: A blue circle with the word "Shh!". Text: "Keep your voice down: It's uncomfortable for a hearing aid user if you shout, and it looks aggressive."
- Tip 10:** Icon: A lit lightbulb. Text: "For longer chats, find a place to talk with good lighting, away from noise and distractions."
- Tip 11:** Icon: Three people icons, one in the middle with arrows pointing to the other two. Text: "If you're talking to one person with hearing loss and one without, focus on both people."