



**The Educational Team for Hearing and Vision**

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**Access Audit -  
To enable deaf people access to  
systems and buildings  
- parents, staff, visitors and pupils**

**July 2020**

- 1. Systems and buildings modifications explained**
- 2. Access Audit**

2008 Karen Jacklin and Jon Cheetham

2015 Updated by Karen Jacklin and Fiona Neilson

2017 Updated by Karen Jacklin, Fiona Neilson and Faye Wright

2020 Updated by Ryan Brewer, Karen Jacklin

## Modifications explained

### The Equality Act 2010

This law bans discrimination (unfair treatment) and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. This includes Schools, as they provide services to the public – for example, interviews, parents' evenings, conference and sporting facilities etc. The Equality Act protects people from discrimination because of certain 'protected characteristics' and also promotes equality of opportunity to prevent discrimination arising. The Equality Act requires reasonable adjustments (changes) to be made so that people who are disabled are not at substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled. If reasonable adjustments are not made, schools could be challenged for being unlawful.

### Deafness

Deaf people may or may not wear hearing aids, Cochlear Implants or Bone Anchored Hearing Aids. If they have no hearing at all there may be no benefit from wearing an aid. Do not assume that an ear without a hearing aid is a 'good' ear and that the person can hear.

Some deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL) as their main mode of communication while others use hearing aids, lip reading and good communication strategies.

Hearing aids do not restore hearing to 'normal'. Hearing aids just make sounds louder, especially background noise. Even with hearing aids, the quality of sound a deaf person hears will be reduced compared to a normal hearing person. Furthermore, even while wearing hearing aids, deaf people will still struggle to hear, particularly if it is noisy.

Deaf people may have a Hearing Dog to assist them. Like Guide Dogs for Blind people, these dogs are highly trained. A deaf person may want and need to bring their Hearing Dog to the setting.

The Equality Act applies to all deaf people regardless of the communication method they use.

### ***1. Approach from outside; getting to and into the main entrance:***

If the access to your grounds, carpark or building is controlled and relies on a transmitted message from an office (e.g. through an intercom system), a deaf person may struggle to effectively hear what is said and may subsequently not know what action to take next. This problem may be compounded if your building entrance is next to a noisy area, such as a busy main road.

Be aware that if a buzzing sound signifies permission to gain entry, a deaf person will not hear this and will not know what to do next.

#### **Reasonable adjustments:**

- **Ringling doorbell** - Install a flashing light indicator or replace with a doorbell that lights up so a deaf person will know that the bell has been activated. Have someone go to the door if the person does not enter or have written information on what to do next.
- **Remote door opening system** – Door opening systems that light up, as well as giving an audible signal when the door is opened, are much more helpful. Have written instructions to tell people to open the door when the light comes on.
- **Text number** – display a text number so a deaf person can text the office to have the door opened or to ask for assistance.

## **2. Reception areas/counters**

Reception areas/counters can be in very noisy, busy places which make it difficult if not impossible to hear and follow conversations. Deaf people are more likely to visit a school in person than hearing people as they cannot make a quick phone call to pass on a message or sort out a query.

### **Reasonable adjustments:**

- **Be welcoming and smile!** Ask how you can help. This might mean moving to a quieter, less busy area or interview room. Have a pen and paper handy. Be patient and give the person time. If the timing of the visit is not good, arrange a more convenient time to meet. This may be necessary if additional reasonable adjustments need to be put in place to aid communication.
- **Good communication** – Face the person talking, talk clearly and naturally without exaggerating. Do not look down or turn away. Do not give up or say, 'it doesn't matter'. Repeat and rephrase but do not shout (a consistent tone of voice and lip pattern are essential for effective communication). Write things down if necessary.
- **Good lighting** – Reception areas should be well lit with a plain background and no window behind it, unless this can be screened. This is so deaf visitors have good access to the speaker's lip pattern, expression and gesture and are not blinded by light coming from behind the counter.
- **Induction loop system** - If possible, install an induction loop - either a counter loop or portable loop for hearing aid users. Reception staff should be trained to know what the loop is for, how it works and how to switch it on and off. Put signs on all counters fitted with loops (signs are usually supplied with loops). If school is planning to update or purchase an induction loop for the first time, it is advisable to get expert advice.
- **Training** – All staff, business support, teaching and non-teaching, should be given deaf awareness and communication skills training.
- **Paper and pens available** - Staff should keep a pen and paper ready for writing things down.
- **Good viewing** - Use non-reflective glass in screens between staff visitors so people can lipread and/or see signs clearly. Open screens, where possible, are optimal for speaking to people face to face.
- **Record and share** with colleagues the communication needs of deaf parents/guardians' so strategies and support can be put in place when parents visit school and always BEFORE meetings, parents evenings, and events such as assemblies.
- **Written information** share information (e.g. events and activities) in written form in the school building and on the school website.
- **Interpreters** - Find out where and how to book Sign Language Interpreters, Lip speakers, Speech-to-text operators and other communication service providers. Make sure staff know how to access these services. Make it 'normal' to book these services for meetings, parents' evenings and events, assemblies etc. ETHV have information on how to book these Services. Please refer the Communication section below for additional options.

Well considered rooms and spaces can make a huge difference to how people feel and behave, especially if they are anxious or upset.

#### **Reasonable adjustments:**

- **Good communication** – Decide on a meeting etiquette before starting. Ask everyone what works well for them; for example, one person talking at a time and raising a hand before speaking (this will make it easier for a deaf person to locate the person talking). It is very difficult for deaf people to follow who is speaking in group conversations.
- **Record and recap key points** and give a copy to parents. Deaf people often mishear and misunderstand what has been said and what needs to happen next. It is helpful if someone can take notes during conversations as deaf people cannot listen, watch lips and take notes for themselves.
- **Effective lighting** - Rooms for meetings etc should be well lit and set out so that deaf people have good visual access to those who are speaking and are not blinded by light coming in from any windows. Blinds may need to be closed and seating arrangements considered. If there is an interpreter, ask where they would like to sit.
- **Good listening environment** - Carpets, blinds and soft furnishings help to improve the acoustic conditions of a room, which can also improve an individual's listening ability. This is of benefit to everyone.
- **Induction loop system** - If possible, install an induction loop - either a permanent one or portable system for hearing aid users. Staff should be trained to know what the loop is for, how it works and how to switch it on and off. If there is an induction loop available, let people know it is there.

### ***Appointment calling systems***

Deaf people cannot hear names or instructions which are given verbally or over a public address system when waiting for their turn.

#### **Reasonable Adjustments:**

- **Number or text display systems** allow everyone equal access to information.
- **Collect people personally** - If staff in small schools or authority offices know deaf people, they can approach them personally.

### ***Lifts***

Lots of people are anxious about using lifts especially on their own for fear of being locked in. Deaf people are often more anxious as they cannot ring for assistance and would not know if someone was giving them instructions or reassurance from outside the closed doors.

#### **Reasonable Adjustments:**

- **Call buttons should light up** to show lifts are working.
- **The visual display** should show which floor the lift is on.
- **Have a text phone number** to contact displayed
- **Emergency alarm buttons** should light up.
- **Install an emergency text system** as well as an emergency phone or intercom.

- **Accompany** a deaf person in the lift.

## ***Communication with deaf people***

All deaf people struggle to hear on the telephone, some cannot hear at all. Responding to numbered options to access the correct department or desired person can be difficult or impossible. Consideration needs to be given to how deaf parents and visitors can contact the school and how school will contact parents, especially in an emergency, as using the telephone may not be an option. Asking other people to pass on information is not acceptable as information may be of a sensitive nature and may not get passed on.

### **Reasonable Adjustments:**

- **Ask deaf people what is the best option for them.** Make sure all staff know what the preferred method is and how to use it. Keep records of deaf parents/guardians' emergency contact details.
- **Give deaf people a text phone number** which they can use to send and receive messages from. If the school has an automated text system which just sends out texts, schools must find a way of allowing a deaf person to respond. For example, hearing people could ring the school back to confirm an absence but a deaf person may be unable to do this. If the school has a system that allows texts to be sent and received, they must be regularly checked and a return text must be sent immediately to confirm that a message has been received, using short plain English. This is important for parents wanting to report a child being ill, to report a problem or to arrange a meeting etc. Similarly, if school sends a text in the case of an emergency, parents should be asked to respond with a message as soon as they receive it.
- **Giving deaf people an email address** which they can use to send and receive messages from. Emails must be regularly checked and a polite return messages must be sent immediately to confirm the message has been received, using short plain English. This is important for parents wanting to report a child being ill, to report a problem or to arrange a meeting etc. Similarly, if school sends an email in the case of an emergency, parents should be asked to respond with an email as soon as they receive it.
- **Use Next Generation Text (NGT) Service**, previously called Text Relay, Text Direct and Typetalk. This is a very useful Service which can connect a hearing person and a deaf person. It is immediate and useful in the case of an emergency or needing an immediate response. A hearing person rings the Next Generation Text Service and gives the message or first part of a conversation. The relay assistant sends a typed version of the message directly to the deaf person who receives the message on their Minicom, smartphone, tablet or computer. The Deaf person types their reply which is then spoken by the relay assistant back to the hearing person. It is easy to use and happens in real time with both people taking part in the conversation. For more information refer to <http://ngts.org.uk/>

For a hearing person to contact a deaf person, prefix the deaf person's mobile number or home/office phone number (including area code) with 18002. It would always be a good idea to have a practice with the parent to learn how to use the Service.

NB: Check if the deaf person uses this Service as they need to have the App on their phone, tablet or computer.

- **Training in how to communicate with deaf people** should be given to all staff including Admin, teaching, non-teaching, school nurse etc.
- **Know how and where to book interpreters** if the family use BSL– and book them! This is essential for parent events and meetings. Interpreters **MUST** be registered.

It is NOT appropriate for children and other family members to interpret as they can be too emotionally involved to provide accurate translations – particularly if there is an issue. More information can be found at <http://www.nrcpd.org.uk> – The National Registers of Communication professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People, <https://www.asli.org.uk> - Association of Sign Language Interpreters and <http://yorkshire-bsl-interpreters.co.uk> – Yorkshire BSL Interpreters.

- **Consider subscribing to an ‘Interpreter Video Call Service’ for deaf people who use BSL or text.** There are lots of agents that offer this Service, which can be found online. Schools would need a tablet, smartphone or computer to do this. This can be a very convenient, quicker, portable and cheaper option. This option allows schools to contact the agent for immediate BSL translation support which does not need booking in advance. This would be helpful if a Deaf person comes into school without an interpreter or one has not been booked. There is often a monthly fee for this Service.
- **Give telephone, mobile phone, Next Generation Text (NGT) Service and email address** equal prominence on school’s letter heading and in school publications.
- **The school website:** consider an access audit of your website to ensure all deaf and other disabled people can use it effectively
- **Written information** available at meetings and events. Consider having a suitable hand out ready for deaf parents at a parents evening which highlights any important information. This is so information isn’t missed, misheard, misunderstood or forgotten about. Furthermore, important information regarding their child’s learning can be taken home to re-read.

## ***Fire/Emergency Alarms***

Deaf people may not hear fire/emergency alarms and are therefore particularly vulnerable. Consideration should be given to areas where deaf people may go on their own eg. toilets, changing rooms, meeting rooms, waiting rooms etc. Make sure all visitors sign in and read the evacuation procedure. Ensure you have a robust method of knowing where visitors are. Do not assume deaf people can hear the fire alarm as it is loud, some deaf people cannot hear loud sounds or certain pitches or tones.

### **Reasonable Adjustments:**

- **Fire Alarms**

Fire Alarm Systems should incorporate a “flashing” strobe light to enable deaf people to be aware when the alarm is activated.

- **Every emergency alarm should have a visual signal.** A school building’s Fire Policy should include evacuation procedure for parents, visitors staff and children with SEND.
- **Fit flashing beacon fire alarms** in toilets, changing rooms and other areas where deaf pupils and adults might be alone.
- **Purchase and lend vibrating pager alarms** to deaf visitors.
- **Written information about evacuation procedures** must be written in plain English. Maps and visual information is easier to understand especially in an emergency.

## ***Assembly Halls***

Listening in a large open room like an assembly hall, is particularly difficult for deaf people. This is due to background noise if the room is full of people, sound reverberation if the room has lots of hard surfaces or is

fairly empty, or a significant distance between the deaf person and the person speaking. If the person talking is more than a few meters away, their voice will be too quiet; as well as this, the increased distance will make it very difficult to read expressions and lip patterns. Simply, Deaf people must always be positioned at the front of the room.

**Reasonable Adjustments:**

- Obtain expert advice on installing and using a loop system
- Obtain expert advice on improving the room acoustics. This can be helpful to everyone who uses the room eg. assemblies, examinations, PE, mealtimes, parent events, careers fairs, drama events, fairs, clubs etc
- Deaf people should be invited to sit at the front of the room.

## ***Classrooms***

Classrooms can be difficult places children and young people to hear, especially those who are deaf. This is due to the number of people in them and the design of the rooms themselves. It is to the benefit of everyone, including staff, that classrooms have good listening conditions so everyone can hear. Evidence shows that if children and young people are not distracted by additional noise, they stay focused for longer, use less cognitive resources for listening, are better motivated and behaviour is improved. Improving listening conditions improves outcomes for all.

Rooms with lots of hard surfaces provide the poorest listening conditions while rooms with carpets and soft furnishings provide the best listening conditions. In addition, background noise caused by noisy heaters and fans, people and events in other rooms or corridor add to the noise that spills in, I turn making it difficult for a deaf person to listen effectively.

**Reasonable Adjustments:**

- Increase the amount of soft furnishing in rooms: carpets, blinds, curtains, pin boards, cupboards
- Lower ceilings and/or use acoustic tiles
- Put soft rubber bungs on the bottom of chairs to reduce the scraping sound
- Repair or replace noisy heating systems
- Do not have noisy hand driers in open plan toilets in Early Years as the noise stops all children hearing in the rest of the room.
- Close the door or windows if there is noise outside the room spilling in.
- Use good quality speakers with interactive white boards
- If groups of children are working close together eg, for letters and sounds, can the distance between them be increased so they are not distracted by each other?
- Mutual agreement of all to be quiet, include the children and young people in discussions about noise.
- Use a traffic light system to show children and young people they are being too noisy and need to be quieter. There are Apps for the white board that can visually show this (e.g. [www.bouncyballs.org](http://www.bouncyballs.org)).
- Consistently use radio aid systems (if available)
- Install Soundfield system within classrooms. Here, the speaker wears/uses a microphone which is amplified by a speaker in the room; this provides an equal spread of sound throughout the room. There is a lot of very positive evidence to the benefit of these systems if managed and used.
- Put yourself in the shoes of the children and young people and really listen. What is annoying! What needs to change?

## ***Access Arrangements for Examinations***

Qualifications are an important way for young people to show their achievements so that they can make progress in their education and move into employment.

It is important that adjustments are made to the way exams are written or assessed to ensure that deaf children and young people are not unfairly disadvantaged as a result of their deafness. Not all deaf children will require access arrangements in their exams. It will depend on each individual and the nature of their deafness. If the child or young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) access arrangements should be discussed at their annual review before the start of the courses which will be examined. It is important that these arrangements are discussed early so that the child or young person knows what to expect and the school can make the necessary arrangements.

It is important that access arrangements are reflected in the support the child or young person would normally receive day to day. This helps ensure they are as comfortable as possible with the circumstances they will experience when they take their exams. This means these arrangements should be in place for any internal exams and mock exams.

Evidence of the 'Normal way of working' is a crucial requirement set by the exam boards for any arrangement. For example, if the school is asking for extra time this should have been provided earlier on in the child's education.

Schools should refer to individual examination boards for details of access arrangements. Arrangements may include extra time, modified language papers, live speakers, readers, oral language modification, or British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation.

Access arrangements also extend to seating arrangements, especially in large examination halls. If a deaf young person is seated alphabetically at the back of the room, they are very unlikely to hear any instructions. This can lead to anxiety and impact their outcomes. Having deaf young people seated at the front of the room, taking examinations in smaller rooms, clearly displaying start and end times, a clock and displaying additional details written for reference are all very helpful.



## Audit of accessibility to school systems and buildings for people who are Deaf

		Requirements met			Action
		Fully	Partially	Not	
*Essential All others are desirable	N/A				
<b>Policy and Procedure:</b>					
*Policy written and available to enable access for all					
*A named person has responsibility for ensuring training for use of equipment and procedures are up to date and current for all staff.					
Evidence to show recommendations and suggestions are being implemented and reasonable adjustments are being made to improve equality of access.					
<b>Training for Staff:</b>					
Deaf Awareness training workshop made available to staff at all levels					
Communication training for staff working who meet the public					
Staff know how to use and manage equipment eg. loop systems					
<b>1.Approach from outside: getting to and in the main entrance</b>					
*Clear directional signs from the pavement/carpark to the building					
*Advice next to all entry phones/buzzers/bells					
*If there is no flashing light to show help is coming, staff should answer entry calls in person- Staff are aware of this?					
A text number displayed so visitors can text to ask for assistance					
*Buzzers light up as well as giving audible signal to indicate when the door is open					
<b>2.Reception area/counter:</b>					
Separate office and reception areas to reduce background noise, or room available to use if not separate to move into. Staff know this?					
Staff know about different communication options for deaf people including text and speech relay Services as they may be contacted through this method					
Staff know how and where to book interpreters, should they be needed					
Well-lit reception space					
Blinds fitted to windows to avoid glare					
Loop system installed and identified with the standard picture					
Loop is regularly checked					
*Pen and paper available					
Non reflective glass for screens to enable lip reading					

*Essential All others are desirable	N/A	Requirements met			Action
		Fully	Partially	Not	
<b>3.Room and other considerations for meetings</b>					
Blinds fitted to windows					
Good lighting					
Carpeting					
Loop system					
Good listening conditions, include, shutting the door, soft furnishings, lowered ceilings					
Visually uncluttered, no distracting pictures, objects or people					
*Quiet-heating systems					
*Meeting etiquette agreed – and staff know this?					
Written information routinely given at the end of meetings					
<b>4.Appointment calling systems</b>					
*PA/name calling system has a visual alternative or staff approach the deaf person directly – staff know they need to do this?					
<b>5.Lifts</b>					
*Call buttons should light up to show they are working					
*Visual display should show which floor the lift is on					
*Emergency buttons should light up					
*Visual indicator to show the emergency button is working					
*Written information on what to do in the case of emergency					
*Written text number clearly shown in case of emergency – reply to be sent immediately					
Protocol that deaf people are accompanied in the lift – known by staff					
<b>6. Communication with deaf people:</b>					
*Know the communication needs of the deaf people who are associated with the setting – parents, staff, delivery people					
*Records kept of deaf parents/guardians communication needs – shared with appropriate staff					
*Record of contact details in case of emergencies – text/mobile					
*Mobile/text phone on which allows a deaf person to reply or contact in the first instance					

	N/A	Requirements met			Action
		Fully	Partially	Not	
*Essential All others are desirable					
*Staff know they must acknowledge that a message has been received and read. It may be appropriate to say someone will get back to them with more information					
*Deaf parents can contact the school and vice versa-with an acknowledgement that messages have been received					
*Staff know where to obtain sign language interpreters, lip speakers text to text operators and other communication service providers					
*Deaf awareness for pupils eg PSHE					
*Record kept of deaf pupils' communication needs					
* Strategies to support deaf parents at open evenings and other events					
*Written information prepared in advance or at meetings to give to deaf people so they know exactly what has been said and agreed					
Staff know they may be contacted by a NGT Relay Assistant on behalf of a deaf person					
*Contact forms and letters have text and e-mail details included					
<b>7.Fire/emergency alarms:</b>					
Emergency alarms should have a visual signal					
*Flashing beacons fitted to toilet areas, changing rooms etc where Deaf people may be alone					
*School building's Fire Policy to include evacuation procedure for individual children with SEND					
*Effective evacuation procedure					
Vibrating pagers given to deaf visitors					
Written information about evacuation procedures is written in plain English and is available for visitors to read					
<b>8.Assembly halls</b>					
Expert advice on installing and using a loop					
Expert advice on improving acoustics					
Loop or Sound field system installed					
*Deaf people to sit near the front					
<b>9.Classrooms</b>					
*Good lighting					
*Bungs on chairs especially in science labs to cut down scraping sounds					
*Doors closed					
Blinds to windows, closed to cover the glass					
Lowered ceilings					
*Quiet heating systems					
*Good quality interactive white board speakers					
Carpets in rooms					

*Essential All others are desirable	N/A	Requirements met			Action
		Fully	Partially	Not	
Carpets in corridors					
External noise kept to a minimum					
Installation of a sound field system					
Pin board to walls					
No hand driers in open plan areas or classrooms					
Specialist advice from an acoustician requested?					
Advice from a Teacher of the Deaf / Educational Audiologist requested?					
<b>Examinations</b>					
Invigilators should have Deaf Awareness Training					
*Interpreters and lip speakers provided if Deaf pupils need them					
*Pupils to sit near the front where they can see and hear instructions					
*For GCSE, access arrangements for Deaf pupils will need to be considered at the <u>start</u> of the course and be part of the usual assessment procedure/ normal working practice.					
Access arrangements must be used for all assessments from Reception to the end of formal education.					

#### References:

Equality Act 2010

Action on Hearing Loss

National Deaf children's Society (NDCS), Access Arrangements for your child's examinations

