



National Association of Deafened People

A guide to working with patients experiencing hearing loss



Introduction

Effective communication between patients and healthcare professionals is particularly important for patients with a hearing loss.

This booklet aims to help to overcome the difficulty of good and effective communication with people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

This booklet seeks to provide practical advice and raise awareness of the issues faced by deaf people when communicating with health professionals and we hope you will find it helpful.

It is vital for professionals to make every effort to enable patients to understand their illness and the treatments and remedies prescribed for it. Misunderstandings can have an adverse effect on the treatment proposed and its outcome.

What is a hearing loss?

Hearing loss covers a wide range from mild to profound and may affect people of different ages. Some people lose their hearing over a period of years whilst some may experience a trauma of a sudden, complete loss of hearing.

Most degrees of hearing loss present a problem with personal communication and particularly those who need to use a hearing aid whether that is a hearing aid or a cochlear implant.

If it is necessary for the patient to remove a hearing device, it can be very difficult to communicate with them.

For more information, please contact us at enquiries@nadp.org.uk

Access to appointments

- Online booking system? Make sure patients are aware of this facility.
- Offer an email contact as alternative arrangement.
- Be prepared to receive Text Relay Service calls and SMS messages

Effective communication

When professional help is requested, **always** ask the patient what form it should take because most people with acquired deafness do not use sign language. Please note, some newly deafened people may not be aware of support available to them, your proactive approach may be required.

Should the professional communication support not be available at short notice, please discuss this with the patient and their representative to see what other solutions maybe available. Some are listed below.

It helps if professionals can ensure that:

- they do not sit with their back to a window;
- do not sit behind a mirror or other reflective surface
- have pen and paper to hand
- face the patient - not the computer - when talking to them
- ask the patient if they are able to follow the meeting, please double check if this is a case
- make written notes to be taken home after appointment to ensure nothing was misunderstood during the appointment

If the patient is staying in hospital, try to ensure all the healthcare professionals who deal with the patient are aware of the need to speak clearly to them and ensure appropriate form of support is arranged.

Lip reading

Lip reading is a skill used by many deafened people and is a way of receiving visual clues of the spoken message delivered by lipspeakers. It involves all facial patterns because they provide visual clues to the conversation which needs to be held at a measured pace.

Please note, newly deafened person may not be yet able to use lipreading skill.

Lip reading can be made easier with the following:

- good lighting,
- face to face communication at a reasonable distance from the speaker,
- willingness to rephrase if the patient has not understood
- facial expression

Booking communication support?

Sometimes, the communication support is necessary to ensure good communication at the meeting.

Please ensure that you have discussed the preferred communication support with your patient before booking a professional.

Communication support professionals, working with deaf people hold suitable qualifications and are registered by their professional organisations.

Additionally, many are registered with National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf People (NRCPD).

Most likely your Clinical Commissioning Group will provide sign posting to local providers.

For additional guidance on type of support, please check our **"How Communication Support can change the lives of deaf people"**

Leaflet available at <http://www.nadp.org.uk/what-we-do/publications/>