

Reasonable Adjustment

Options for working with people affected by deafness

deafscotland is the user led, membership organisation for the deaf sector in Scotland. For more information, visit the deafscotland website by clicking [here](#).

deafscotland use the term the 'four pillars of deafness' to describe Deaf, Deafblind, Deafened and Hard of Hearing as people with different levels of deafness with different barriers to overcome and have different language and communication support needs. <https://deafscotland.org/>

What is Reasonable Adjustment? Reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010 is an adjustment to service provision or work practice to make sure a person with a disability, physical or mental health condition is not significantly disadvantaged when using a service or doing their job.

Social model, rights based, person centred

Communication is a barrier for those affected by deafness. COVID-19 brings additional barriers such as distancing, screens and the use of face coverings, including masks, which in turn have a negative impact on people's ability to communicate effectively. Hearing aids are assistive, not corrective and are only able to work at a 1 metre distance so 2 metre distancing is a big problem.

People affected by deafness should be treated with dignity and respect. We are happy to advise on any given situations and help prepare for positive communication during the recovery phase.

Masks muffle sounds and block access to lip-reading and facial expressions, both of which assist communication. Masks with transparent panels have limited capability. In most situations, visors would be a better option, particularly if supported by screens.

It is vital that safety and the protection of lives comes first, however, communication is also vital for society.

Adjustments need to be considered, fair, and person-centred. They can be helped by a quiet environment, good lighting and the length of time a conversation may take.

Those affected by deafness should wear masks unless they are exempt, whenever possible, to protect others. Many will find it difficult to manage a mask when using hearing aids or cochlear implants.

General points

To attract the attention of people affected by deafness it may be necessary tap them on the outside of the shoulder. Please consider using gloves as required.

You should always ask

- The deaf person how they would like you to communicate with them;
- Deaf/Deaf Sign language users what language they use – not all use **British** Sign Language (BSL).

Interpreters

1. Use a visor rather than a mask to allow full facial expression to be seen.
2. Keep the two metre distance.
3. Or use online Video Interpreting (BSL/English, other sign language/English access) via smart technology.

People who are Deafened may rely on visual aids, hearing loop/technology, lip-reading, facial expressions and written communication.

1. If the person is using hearing aids, reduce the distance apart to 1 metre
2. Use a visor rather than a mask, when possible.
3. Think about using a portable hearing loop (also microphones/receiver technology). This might need to be planned so that you have the equipment available.

4. Use pen and paper, texting, email, video-conferencing with captions and other online Electronic Notetaking/access via smart technology.

People who are Hard of Hearing may rely on a combination of methods of access:

1. If wearing hearing aid(s) ask the person if their hearing is better on one side than the other. If “yes”, then stay on that side. Cut the distance apart to 1 metre,
2. Wear a visor rather than a mask, where possible
3. Consider the use of technology as before. This might need to be planned before meeting with the person.

The barriers for those that are Deafblind may be more complex and depend on the balance of residual sight and/or hearing:

1. Touch to guide, communicate and support people may be essential. Use of gloves might need to be planned and arranged in advance.
2. Use of masks and technology should be explored and agreed.
3. Person-centred solutions need to be found which may include use of technology.

For more information please contact us by email at admin@deafscotland.org

By text on 07925 417338

If a BSL user, through contactSCOTLAND-BSL

We would be delighted to get feedback about this guidance using the contact details above.