Making Zoom Accessible
6. Communication Support

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 who have different barriers to overcome and have different Communication and Language Support needs.

Firstly, ensure any communication support requirements have been identified and addressed. Be mindful that communication support needs vary across and between the four pillars of deafness.

1. Electronic Note-taker

An Electronic Note-taker (ENT) may attend the meeting and type a record of what is said in real time allowing participants to follow the conversation. By using the 'Share Screen' function, the Electronic Note-taker can share their note-taking screen and display the electronic notes taken during the meeting for participants to view.

2. Closed Captions

Adding Closed Captions to a Zoom meeting can make the meeting more accessible to attendees. The use of Closed Captions also assists with comprehension for those for whom English is not their first language.

The Closed Captions function allows the Host, participant or Electronic Note-taker, assigned by the Host, to provide Closed Captions during a meeting. When enabled, these can be typed directly on to the Zoom platform or can be provided via a third party closed captioning source. Participants are alerted that Closed Captions are available and can choose whether they wish to 'view/hide subtitles'. The font size of the subtitles can also be adjusted to individual preference. Participants can also choose to 'view full transcript' where a pop up box will appear which contains the full transcript. Closed Captions can also provide a more flexible user experience and can be used in environments where ambient noise may be an issue.

These helpful hints could also enhance communication within meetings.

1. Share Meeting Materials Ahead of Meeting

Share meeting materials/presentations in advance to allow participants to review before the meeting. This is especially important for those who may experience barriers to communication. Those attending the meeting to provide communication support would also benefit from receiving materials in advance to allow them to prepare for the meeting.

2. Repeat Questions/Provide Clarification

In larger meetings all participants are not visible on screen at the same time. It may not be easy for participants to identify who is asking a question. Participants can also choose to ask questions via the 'Chat' facility. If facilitating a meeting by stating the name of who asked the question and by repeating the question this can provide clarification for others.

3. 'Raise Hand'

As well as manually raising your hand to visually attract attention during a meeting, participants can be made aware of the Raise Hand function which can be used to alert the Host if they wish to ask a question or comment. This can be found within 'Participants' at the bottom of the screen.

4. 'Chat'

The Chat function can be used by the Host and Participants to communicate separately within the meeting. Messages can be sent privately or publicly using the Chat facility to the Host or to other Participants to ask questions, raise comments or seek clarification. Files can also be shared/uploaded within the Chat facility.

5. Breakout Rooms

Breakout Rooms can be set up within the meeting to facilitate smaller group discussion if needed. The Host can assign Participants into these groups with the addition of communication support if required.

6. Be Respectful of other Participants

As with face to face meetings, be mindful that only one person should speak at a time. This will allow participants and those providing communication support to focus on the active speaker. Make sure facial expressions and lip patterns can also be viewed clearly.

We welcome your feedback

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased remote online working. As technology develops, our Factsheets will be updated to ensure accessible and secure use of Zoom.

To make sure that this factsheet is always up-to-date, we invite you to share your experiences both positive and negative. Please contact us at admin@deafscotland.org with your experiences.