Access and Communication Toolkit

A Guide to Good Practice in meeting the needs of Sensory Impaired People in Lincolnshire

DEAF Lincs

sense

LVIS/Guide Dogs
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Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires providers of services and facilities to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ in order to facilitate access for all users of these services and facilities. This includes an anticipatory duty to do so. In section 21 the Act focuses on information provision as well as practices, policies and the physical environment. This document sets out minimum requirements to ensure that service provision in the County of Lincolnshire will provide for the needs of Sensory Impaired people and will result in a more inclusive environment.

This pack has been produced by representatives from the following organisations:

- Sense East
- Deaflincs
- Lincolnshire Visual Impairment Services
- Lincolnshire County Council

(Contact details for these organisations can be found on page 20/21)

The aim of the pack is to give as much information about communication and access as possible. However, it is recognised that information changes and therefore it is anticipated that the pack will be updated and revised at some point in the future. Please contact LCC to inform of any changes to detail (contact details on page 21).

This pack can also be produced in alternative formats to meet individual requests. Please contact Lincolnshire County Council for more information.
Categories of Sensory Impairment

People who are Deaf – People who describe themselves as Deaf have probably been deaf since birth or early childhood.

Communication method – they are more likely to be sign language users. They may not use speech to communicate.

Access to information – English is not their first language. They may need written information to be modified. (See page 14)

People who are Deafened – people who describe themselves as deafened are likely to have become deaf after being fully hearing. They are likely to have a total or severe hearing loss. They are unlikely to benefit from a hearing aid.

Communication method – They are likely to communicate using speech and access communication using lipreading (See page 9/10 for explanation of lipspeakers).

Access to information – If English is their first language and they have no visual impairment then they would probably have no problems accessing written information.
People who are hard of hearing – people who describe themselves as hard-of-hearing have probably had a gradual loss of hearing. A high percentage of older people will have a significant hearing loss. People who are hard-of-hearing are likely to have some residual hearing and may be hearing aid users.

Communication method – They are likely to communicate using speech and will access communication through a combination of clear speech and lipreading (See page 9/10 for explanation of lipspeakers).

Access to information – If English is their first language and they have no visual impairment then they would probably have no problems accessing written information.

People who are Visually Impaired – will have a reduced field of vision. What they can see and the level of restriction will depend on their eye condition or disease. For example they might have tunnel vision only or patchy vision or no central vision at all. The type and degree of sight loss will affect their ability to perform different tasks.

People who are registered as ‘Sight Impaired/Partially Sighted’ and People who are registered as ‘Severely Sight Impaired/Blind’ – have had their level of sight loss formally diagnosed and certified by a Consultant Ophthalmologist so that the local council can register him or her.

Communication method – Speech.

Access to information – Written information should be made available in large print (see page 13/14) and also in other formats upon request (see page 12/13).
People who are deafblind
Deafblindness has many causes. It affects people of all ages in different ways, and no two deafblind people are the same. Many people will not be totally deaf and totally blind but will have some remaining use of one or both senses. Others will also have additional physical and/or learning disabilities as well.

Acquired or congenital deafblindness
When someone is born with combined sight and hearing difficulties this is called congenital deafblindness. If they develop these problems later in life, this is called acquired deafblindness. This may be due to an accident, illness or as a result of aging in later life. In some cases, people may be born with a genetic condition such as Usher syndrome, which may mean that they progressively lose their sight and hearing.

Communication and access to information
The communication challenges and access to information needs facing people who are born with impaired vision and hearing, will be very different from people who have had some experience of using their vision and hearing in their early years. It is important to stress that deafblind people have a great range of communication needs which may change over time. Their method of accessing information can vary considerably from one person to another. It is vital to find out from the person, their carer or family member how they would like to communicate and receive information.
One-to-one Communication

Deaf - Sign Language Users

This group of people normally fall into one of two categories:-

1) Those who use British Sign Language (BSL) because they are pre-lingually deaf and therefore, may have little or no spoken or written language.

2) Those who use Sign Supported English (SSE) and may have some spoken or written language. This may be along a range of low to high level proficiency.

Both these categories will require an interpreter (Language Service Professional see page 9-11) for communication purposes. Some will also be proficient lip readers and may benefit from a lip speaker, especially in meetings or conferences (See page 9-10).

There are exceptions to the above, in that some pre-lingually deaf people may be able to use English. It is therefore possible that a speech-to-text operator may provide good communication support in the right setting (See page 10).

In summary, each individual must be given the opportunity to choose their own communication method.

People with acquired deafness

These are people who have learned their natural spoken language through hearing. As a general rule they will fully understand spoken and written language, although this
may be diminished in some cases due to other reasons e.g. illiteracy. The practical effects of acquired deafness are to diminish a person’s ability to communicate effectively in a wide range of settings. Some hearing aids have a Telecoil facility which means they may be used more easily with certain types of equipment; telephones and loop systems. Loop systems can commonly be found in supermarkets, banks, churches, village halls and meeting rooms in modern buildings. A visual symbol is normally displayed to convey this to a user. Staff within these settings will need to have training in the use of loop systems.

**Summary**
Each deaf person is an individual and some people with little or no hearing will rely heavily on lip reading and good communication tactics. Others may use BSL or SSE. In meetings and conferences one or more of interpreters, lip speakers and speech to text operators may be needed. In other cases a loop system and environmental attention (good lighting, room layout, clear speech) may suffice.

**People who are Severely Sight Impaired and Sight Impaired**

People with sight loss will access communication through speech (providing they have no significant hearing loss). It is important to remember however that they may not have access to any form of visual communication for example facial expressions, body language, gesturing. This communication will have to be relayed in an auditory, descriptive way. To understand this, imagine giving directions to someone over the phone.
People who are Deafblind

People who are deafblind use many different methods of communication. The method chosen will depend upon the amount of residual sight and hearing remaining, the cause of deafblindness and how long the person has had a sensory impairment. Of course, some deafblind people use a combination of methods to communicate.

Here is an explanation of some of the communication methods used with deafblind people:

**Deafblind manual alphabet**
Also known as finger-spelling, the Deafblind Manual Alphabet is a method of spelling out words onto a deafblind person's hand. Each letter is denoted by a particular sign or place on the hand.

**Block**
Block is a manual form of communication where words are spelled out on to the palm of the deafblind person's hand.

**Visual frame signing**
For people with limited vision British Sign Language can still be used. In this case, signing will be done within the person's remaining field of vision.

**Hands on signing**
This method of communication is based upon British Sign Language. With this system, the deafblind person follows the signs by placing his hands over those of the signer and feeling the signs formed. People with Usher syndrome may use this form of communication as their sight reduces.
Language Service Professionals (LSPs)

- BSL/English Interpreters
- Lipspeakers
- Speech-to-text reporters
- Electronic notetakers
- Manual notetakers
- Deafblind interpreters (manual)

BSL/English Interpreters

British Sign Language BSL/English interpreters (sometimes known as Sign Language Interpreters) are trained accredited professionals. They are used in many different domains. Where a Deaf person, that uses Sign Language, meets a hearing person that cannot sign there is a need for a language professional.

Lipspeakers

A lipspeaker is a hearing person who acts as a professional aid to communication between deaf and hearing people. Lipspeakers silently repeat a speaker's message as it is being spoken and the deaf person lipreads them. They reproduce clearly the shapes of the words and the natural rhythm and stress used by the speaker. They also use facial expression, gesture and, if requested, fingerspelling, to aid the lipreader's understanding. For many assignments two lipspeakers will be required. A lipspeaker should not be expected to work alone for a whole day or for complex and specialist areas of work.
Lipspeakers are qualified at two levels, level 2 and level 3, and you should book one who is at the right level for the assignment.

**Speech-to-text reporter (STTR)**

Speech-to-text reporters listen to what is being said and type it, word for word, onto an electronic shorthand keyboard, which is linked to their laptop. Type a verbatim (word for word) account of what is being said. This is then displayed on a laptop or screen for deaf people to read.

STT reporting is suitable for deaf people who are comfortable reading English, often at high speed and sometimes for up to a couple of hours at a time. Remember that a STT reporter must have a table for the equipment they use and access to an electrical socket, so they may not be able to work everywhere.

**Electronic notetakers**

Electronic notetakers type onto a computer a summary of what is being said. This information then appears on the screen so it can be read. Electronic notetaking means you have fewer words to read compared to speech-to-text reporting, but it does mean you won't get a full word-for-word report.

**Manual notetakers**

Notetakers are trained to take notes for deaf people in meetings, on courses, or at other events. Notetakers can be flexible and will write notes in a way that suits the individual.
Deafblind Manual Interpreters

Deafblind manual interpreters are trained to use the deafblind manual alphabet, where the words are spelt out onto the fingers and hands of a deafblind person. Registered deafblind manual interpreters have the CACDP level 4 Certificate in Deafblind Interpreting and can work to speeds of 60 wpm.

Please note:
If it is, as a service provider, your duty to provide a Language Service Professional then please allow plenty of time for booking (at least 4 – 6 weeks in advance, if possible).
Access to Information

Sensory impairment is a very individual disability and no two people will have exactly the same communication and information needs. The format in which a person with sensory impairment requires written information depends upon their use of any residual hearing and/or vision, and any additional disabilities. It is not always appropriate for information to be given or correspondence to be sent through the post. Their sensory loss might mean that they need a person to relay the information directly to them, on a one-to-one basis.

Information should be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Different formats

- Braille – Grade 1
- Braille – Grade 2
- Moon
- Large Print
- Standard print
- Audio tape
- Computer disc
- Languages other than English
- Raised letters

Description and use of the different formats

Braille is a system of raised dots which can be read by touch using patterns to represent letters and numbers. There are two types of Braille:

- Grade 1 – a letter by letter transcription
- Grade 2 – a shorthand version for more experienced Braille readers.

Please note – only 3% of blind and partially sighted people read Braille.
Written information can be transcribed into Braille (See page 15 for Braille transcription services)

Moon is a system of raised shapes. The shapes represent letters and numbers. Written information can be transcribed into Moon. (See page 15 for Moon transcription services.)

Large print.

- When creating large print on word processing systems the recommended font is Arial size 16 - 22.
- Avoid italics and the underlining of text.
- Be careful of the amount of bold type used as it can be difficult to read in large amounts.
- Keep the layout clear and logical with an easy to follow contents list and headings.
- Ensure that there is consistency in the spacing between each word.
- As a general rule the space between one line and the next should be at least 1.5 to 2 times the space between the words on a line.
- The text should always be aligned to the left margin.
- Avoid centred text, text over an image and text set vertically.
- Do not print near folds as materials may need to be held flat under a magnifier.
When using handwritten large print –

- Use a good quality black felt tip pen on either white or yellow paper.
- Check with the deafblind person how large the letters need to be.
- Make sure there is sufficient light for the person to read easily.
- Ask if they want the writing in upper case, lower case or mixed letters.
- Write in neat, clear handwriting leaving ample spaces at the end of words and between lines.
- Keep sentences short and concise.

Colour and contrast

Sharply contrasting colours are much clearer for people who are visually impaired. Individual preferences vary but black on white or black on yellow are generally regarded as the clearest combinations.

**Modifying written language**

- Try to construct sentences in no more than 12 words in total.
- Never use a long word when a short one will do.
- Avoid using words such as ‘it’, ‘there’, ‘we’ at the beginning of sentences. State the subject or object at the beginning of the sentence.
- Avoid using metaphors, be prepared to explain them if need be.
- Try also to avoid using words that have more than one meaning.
• Do not use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or jargon if you can think of any everyday English equivalent. If you must use jargon, also include a definition.

• When you first use an abbreviation also include the full text. Later references to the same words can then be abbreviated.

Transcription Services

RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) offer a transcription service and can reproduce information in Braille, large print and on audio tape. There will be a charge for this service.
For more information contact RNIB Business Liaison Team:-
Telephone – 01733 375370
E-mail – businesslink@rnib.org.uk

The Sense transcription service can give you advice on how to transcribe documents. They can be contacted directly at:-

The Sense Transcription Service
33 Earlsdon Avenue South
Coventry
CV5 6DR
Tel & Text – 0247 671 7522
Fax – 024 7671067
E mail – transcription@sensewest.org.uk
Meetings and Conferences

Planning Meetings Involving People who have Sensory Impairments

Find out who your Participants Are

It is essential to prepare well beforehand and not to make assumptions about the participants. The three key elements to this preparation are: –

• Communication support
• Access to information
• Mobility support

(A questionnaire could be sent out to participants in preparation for the meeting)  This information is needed to ensure that everyone’s needs are met.

The Venue

• Is there parking at the venue? Is disabled parking available close to entrances?
• Revolving doors may be difficult for people who are being guided. If revolving doors are in place, are there also additional entrance doors?
• Entry systems which require a visitor to speak / listen to a person inside the building can cause particular problems to people who are sensory impaired.
• Entry systems which require a visitor to press one of a selection of buttons can be problematic for people who
are blind / deafblind. Alternate ways of accessing the building should always be available.

• Are entrances and corridors free from obstructions which may cause access problems.
• Does it have appropriate lighting for the person with the visual impairment?
• Is the venue adaptable for people who use Interpreters i.e. - space for seating to be changed so that the Interpreters can be directly in front of the person or to the side?
• Is the environment free from background distractions such as noise or movement?
• Does the venue have a working loop system?
• Does the venue have suitable and accessible power points to support the use of equipment such as laptops for speech to text users?
• Are there audible/flashing/vibrating fire alarms?
• Does the venue allow assistance dogs into all parts of the building?
• Is there a suitable area for exercising and toileting the assistance dogs? Has a provision been made for the dog to have water?
• Check with the Interpreter for any additional environmental needs e.g. colour of backdrop.

Checklist for running meetings
Before the meeting

• Check suitability of venue

• Contact and consult participants about their needs

• Book interpreters well in advance and consult them about their needs

• Prepare an agenda to include regular communication breaks.

• Research has shown the optimum period for interpreting is twenty minutes and then ideally a short break is required. Any longer than this and the quality of the interpretation will begin to suffer.

• Prepare and circulate papers for interpreters and/or transcription

• Provide any written material in preferred formats and check the need for personal readers for people who are visually impaired.

• Include preparation time for speakers and interpreters

On the day of the meeting

• Check participants’ needs on the day of the meeting

• Introductions might be helpful for visually impaired people

• Ensure that the venue has clear signs for all attendees.
• Check that the equipment is working.

• Check that the environment is satisfactory for everyone.

**During the meeting**

• Check that communication is working for everyone

• Remember communication breaks

**After the meeting**

• Evaluation forms should be in an accessible format

• Evaluation forms should include a question on accessibility
Local Contacts

For more information on the contents of this pack please contact any of the organisations below:

SILCS
(Sensory Impairment Lincolnshire County Services) –

Phone: 01522 848295

Deaflincs -
Annexe A
Lincolnshire County Council Offices
Eastgate
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 7EB

Phone: Voice: 01522 554932 Minicom: 01522 554933
Fax: 01522 554934
Mobile: 07702 820539 text sms only

E-mail: info@deaflincs.com
Website: www.deaflincs.com
Sense –
The Hammond centre
East Street
Nettleham
Lincs
LN2 2SL

Phone: 01522 595777
Fax: 01522 595574
E-mail: nettleham@sense.org.uk

Lincolnshire County Council –
Lincolnshire County Council,
County Offices,
Newland,
Lincoln LN1 1YL

Phone: 01522-552222
Fax: f 01522-516137
Minicom: 01522 552 055
E-mail: customer_services@lincolnshire.gov.uk

National Websites

RNID –  www.rnid.org.uk

RNIB –  www.rnib.org.uk

Deafblind UK –  www.deafblind.org.uk

Action For
Blind People -  www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk
Glossary

Block – Block is a manual form of communication where words are spelled out on to the palm of the deafblind person's hand

Braille – A system of raised dots which can be read by touch using patterns to represent letters and numbers.

BSL – British Sign Language

British Sign Language - The language of the Deaf Community, used by many deaf people as their first or preferred method of communication. BSL is a language in its own right and has a unique grammatical structure, which differs from the English Language.

DDA - The Disability Discrimination Act

Deafblind manual alphabet – A tactile form of communication where the words are spelt out onto the fingers and hands of a deafblind person.

Electronic note takers – Electronic notetakers type onto a computer a summary of what is being said. This information then appears on the screen so it can be read.

Hands on signing – This method of communication is based upon British Sign Language. With this system, the deafblind person follows the signs by placing his hands over those of the signer and feeling the signs formed.

LCC – Lincolnshire County Council

LSP – Language Service Professional
A Lipspeaker – A lipspeaker is a hearing person who acts as a professional aid to communication between deaf and hearing people. Lipspeakers silently repeat a speaker's message as it is being spoken and the deaf person lipreads them.

Loop system – Equipment used to create a ‘loop’ round the edge of the meeting room. The person switches their hearing-aids to ‘T’ and is able to focus on one sound - i.e. voices, without interference from background noise. Some people may also use personal loop systems.


Moon – A system of raised shapes which can be read by touch using patterns to represent letters and numbers.

Notetakers - Notetakers are trained to takes notes for deaf people in meetings, on courses, or at other events.

Ophthalmologist – A specialist in eye surgery.

Prelingual – Before acquiring language.

SSE – SSE (Signed Supported English)

Sign Supported English -This method uses signs taken from BSL to support spoken English. SSE follows the English grammar and word order.

STTR – Speech to Text Reporter

Speech to text reporter – Speech-to-text reporters listen to what is being said and type it, word for word, onto an electronic shorthand keyboard, which is linked to their laptop.
Telecoil – An enabling device which allows hearing aid users to access specialised telephonic and other assistive electronic equipment by switching their hearing aids to the ‘T’ position when fitted. All NHS prescribed hearing aids have this facility but not all those which are privately prescribed.

Usher Syndrome – A genetic condition which results in hearing loss and a visual impairment known as Retinitis Pigmentosa.

VFS - Visual frame signing is often used by people with restricted vision. Signs are produced within a visual space defined by the deaf/deafblind person to suit their own preferences.