

Deaf-friendly higher education

For staff in
higher education



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Acknowledgements

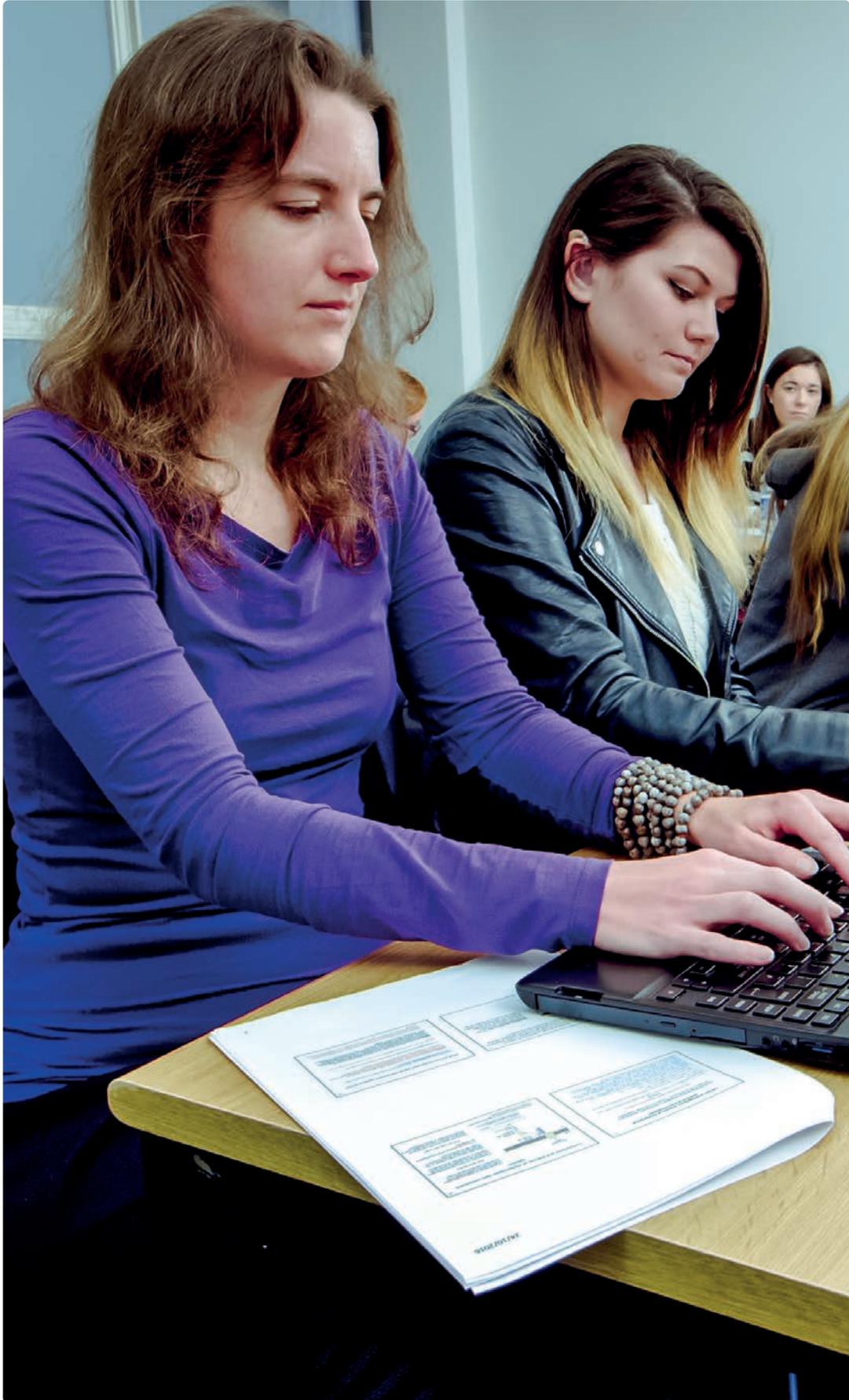
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A note about terms

We use the term deaf to refer to all types of hearing loss, from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary hearing loss such as glue ear.



1

Introduction

Deaf people can work in a wide range of roles and sectors, and higher education is a popular route for deaf young people who need a degree to work in their chosen field. It's therefore important that staff working in these settings understand deaf young people's needs and have strategies to meet them, so that they get the most out of higher education.

This resource will help higher education staff to support deaf students to achieve in higher education. It has been developed by the National Deaf Children's Society with support from the Consortium of Higher Education Support Services for deaf students (CHESS) and the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP). The resource will help staff in higher education to:

- make sure that deaf students have the support they need to make good progress, take advantage of the opportunities of higher education and successfully complete their studies
- take the reasonable steps required under the Equality Act 2010 (or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland) to make sure that deaf students are not treated less favourably than other students.

Handouts for teaching and support staff

There are three handouts in the appendices that can be given to teaching and student support staff.

- **Appendix A: Making sure deaf students are included**
- **Appendix B: Making sure deaf students can access student services**
- **Appendix C: Identifying needs checklist for disability advisers**

Who can use this resource?

This resource is for staff in higher education, including:

- admissions staff
- disability advisers
- lecturers, teachers and personal tutors
- higher or degree apprenticeship providers.



2

Deafness and its impact

Level and types of deafness

There are different levels and types of deafness. A deaf young person may have a permanent mild, moderate, severe or profound hearing loss in one or both ears, or a temporary loss such as glue ear.

The impact of being deaf will vary from person to person regardless of their level of hearing loss. As with all disabilities, some will be more affected than others and will have different support needs. It's therefore important to find out what each student's needs are and what impact their deafness has on their learning.

See page 12 for information on how to identify a student's support needs.

Hearing aids and cochlear implants

Most deaf young people use hearing technology supplied by the NHS such as hearing aids, bone conduction hearing devices or cochlear implants. These are used to improve a deaf young person's access to sound, but it won't give them 'normal' or 'typical' hearing. A deaf person may not hear speech clearly or hear enough to understand without lip-reading.

Some deaf young people don't use any hearing technology. This can be because it has little or no benefit or because they don't like wearing it, or for other reasons.

Deafness and additional needs

There's a relatively high prevalence of deafness among people who have learning difficulties or other disabilities.¹ When this happens, there's a risk that the young person's deafness can be overlooked, so it's important to follow the steps outlined in this resource to address the impact of their deafness, so that they can access learning, communicate successfully and socialise.

Impact of deafness on language acquisition and development

Deafness can have a major impact on the development of spoken language as this skill is usually acquired through hearing and vision. Late diagnosis of deafness or a lack of exposure to spoken or signed language during the early years can also lead to delayed literacy skills and language development (spoken or signed). As a result, some deaf young people struggle to make sense of what people say or express what they're feeling.

1. Consortium for Research into Deaf Education. CRIDE report on 2018/2019 survey on educational provision for deaf children: UK-wide summary. [ndcs.org.uk/CRIDE](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/CRIDE)

The impact of deafness on a person's language development will also have been influenced by factors such as:

- the age at which they became deaf
- whether deafness was diagnosed early or late
- the support they received from their parents
- the quality of support they received at school
- how well their hearing technology worked and how often they wore it.

Adjustments to teaching and provision of support can help to overcome barriers to learning caused by language delay. See pages 15 to 22.

Earlier diagnoses and advances in hearing technologies mean that more deaf young people are starting higher education using spoken language (with or without using sign language). However, their language, communication and learning needs may not be immediately obvious as their good speech might hide a lower level of language and literacy.

See page 12 for information on how to identify a student's support needs.

Impact of deafness on social development and wellbeing

Deaf students might find it difficult to socialise with hearing students and staff, particularly if their peers don't know how to communicate with a deaf person. Group conversations can be particularly challenging as it's very easy to lose track of conversation if a deaf young person is relying on lip-reading and everyone is talking over each other.

See page 27 for advice on overcoming social barriers.

Deaf young people can face barriers to incidental learning (learning through overhearing other people's conversations), which can have an impact on the development of social skills and learning of behavioural norms.²

Deaf young people are more likely to experience mental health issues. These are influenced by factors such as the inclusivity of their family environment, resources at school and the quality of interactions with their peers.³

If you think one of your students is experiencing mental health issues, you should encourage them to access the counselling service at your institution (see page 28).

2. Calderon, R., Greenberg, M. T., Social and Emotional Development of Deaf Children: Family, school and program effects. *The Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language and Education* Volume 1. 2011. 177–189. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

3. Fellingner et al. Mental Health of Deaf People. *The Lancet*. 2012. 379, No. 9820: 1037–1044.

How deaf people communicate

How a deaf person communicates will vary from person to person. Some will use speech and lip-reading only, and others will use British Sign Language (BSL). Some may use speech and sign language together while others might not use speech at all. Sign language users who have learnt spoken language first may use Sign Supported English (SSE) (or Welsh). This is speaking and signing at the same time or signing without speech but in spoken language word order. BSL has a different 'word' order to SSE.





3

Moving into higher education

Extra information for deaf young people

In addition to the information you provide for all prospective students, deaf young people may also be interested in:

- your institution's experience of educating deaf students and the specialist support available to them (if you have no previous experience of educating deaf people, you might want to highlight your experience in supporting students with other disabilities)
- more specific details on the content of courses and how they're delivered (for example, will there be many small group seminars or one-to-one tutorials?)
- how the learning environment has been adapted to make it accessible to deaf students, for example acoustics or fire alarm systems in student accommodation (see page 22 for examples of adaptations)
- contact information (including email addresses) of the key staff members who will be able to answer their questions about support, course requirements, facilities, etc.
- how they can request communication support for open days and induction days.

Make sure you use plain English (clear, jargon-free language) in all written information. All audio-visual information (online videos, podcasts) should have subtitles. For information on how to subtitle videos, go to page 16.

Open days

For open days organised by your institution, it's very helpful if:

- you ask prospective deaf students to get in contact as far in advance as possible so that you can organise communication support
- disability advisers (or equivalent) are available to discuss the support available
- current or former deaf students are available to discuss their experiences if possible.

Selection process

Under the Equality Act 2010 (or Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland), you must not unfairly discriminate against disabled young people in your admissions processes. For deaf students, this may mean making the following reasonable adjustments.

UCAS/application forms

Although a deaf young person might hold Level 3 (or higher) qualifications in subjects relevant to the course they're applying for, they may have lower levels of literacy. This can leave them at a disadvantage when writing personal statements with application forms. It may be reasonable to overlook below average standards of literacy if competence in reading and writing is not being assessed in course exams and coursework.

Interviews

If interviews are scheduled, it's essential that staff understand the candidate's communication requirements. You must provide communication support if required (see page 19). The interview should be held in a room with good lighting, with no or low levels of background noise and good acoustics. For more information about acoustics, go to page 22 or ndcs.org.uk/acoustics.

Admissions tests

Where a candidate is required to complete an admissions test, you should make the same access arrangements available as they would have had for public examinations. See page 23 for details of access arrangements available to deaf students.

Identifying the student's needs

Only around one-third of deaf students apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).⁴

This could be because:

- they're not aware of the Allowance
- there's a perceived stigma in being seen as needing support
- they don't require a support worker or equipment.

“I didn't apply for it [DSA]. I can't really remember why. I think it was because... I thought I wouldn't need it. I didn't apply for it this year either... I didn't really want the special treatment, I guess. I can't really explain.” *Max, deaf young person*

Attainment is lower among disabled students who don't claim DSA compared to those who do. You should make information about DSA easily available to students and promote them in a positive way to avoid deaf students feeling stigmatised.

4. Equality Challenge Unit (2016). Equality in Higher Education: Students statistical report 2016.



For more information about DSA, visit ndcs.org.uk/dsa.

Where possible, an assessment for DSA should be carried out by an assessor with experience in assessing deaf students. Poor assessments can lead to inappropriate recommendations (for example, for radio aids that are not compatible with a student's hearing aids or a communication support worker when fluent British Sign Language interpretation is required).

Some deaf students will have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (England), statement of special educational needs (Northern Ireland), Individual Development Plan (Wales), or Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) (Scotland), which can be shared with relevant staff with the student's permission.

Evidence required for student funding bodies

Sometimes a student's Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) assessment can be delayed if they haven't given their student funding body medical evidence that proves they're deaf, and, for some bodies, that it has a 'substantial and adverse' impact on daily life. For a deaf person, this is usually a letter from their GP or Audiologist that confirms their deafness and that it has a significant impact on day-to-day life.

You should advise prospective students to apply for DSA as early as possible and to get the appropriate evidence for their application.

See page 37 for an identifying needs checklist for disability advisers.

“I had to ask my audiologist to provide a copy of my audiograms to prove my level of deafness, and I had to ask a previous Teacher of the Deaf to write a letter saying I needed the Phonak Smartlink [radio aid] system to function effectively in an academic setting. Due to these hurdles, I didn't have my vital Smartlink until the second semester of first year, almost four months after I first applied for Disabled Students' Allowance. It wasn't a positive experience for me!”

Glen, deaf young person

➔ Checklist: Making sure a deaf young person has an effective transition into higher education

This checklist will help you make sure you’re doing everything you can to support a deaf young person to successfully move into higher education.

| | |
|--|--|
| Is information about your institution and its courses accessible to deaf people? (For example, subtitles on videos and information written in plain English.) | |
| Have you given the deaf student the opportunity to attend open days? If required, have you organised communication support? | |
| Have you provided, if required, communication support for interviews and other admissions processes? | |
| Does the deaf student have a key contact at your institution for any queries about the support they will receive? | |
| Has relevant information (for example, an EHC plan) about the student been passed on (with their permission) to help you plan for their support? | |
| Have you given the student information about applying for DSA? | |
| Have the student’s lecturers, support staff and accommodation provider been given deaf awareness training? See what training we offer to professionals by going to ndcs.org.uk/training . | |
| If required, has communication support been booked or any necessary technology purchased in advance of induction sessions and the first few weeks of lectures and classes? | |

“So we made an appointment for me to go in [to meet the disability adviser]. It was either just before Freshers’ week or in Freshers’ week or just after Freshers’ week. Sometime just before the teaching, which is really too late to make adjustments.” Lily, deaf young person

4

Making lectures and teaching deaf friendly

The role of lecturers and course leaders

Lecturers, course leaders and other higher education staff are required to make reasonable adjustments to their teaching and assessment methods to accommodate the needs of disabled students under the Equality Act 2010 (or Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland).

For a deaf student, the following reasonable adjustments to teaching may be required.

Making sure the student can see you or their interpreter

Many deaf young people rely on lip-reading to understand speech, so you should avoid turning your back to a deaf student and make sure that equipment doesn't obstruct their view of your face. Your face should be well-lit – you should avoid standing in front of a window or bright light so that your face isn't in shadow.

When delivering presentations, you should avoid turning the lighting too low so that the student can still lip-read or see their British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or lipspeaker clearly (for an explanation of lipspeakers, see page 20). If the lights must be dimmed, using Anglepoise lamps will help the student to see you and their support worker.

Face masks will have a negative impact on deaf students who rely on lip-reading. If you feel strongly about wearing a face mask when lecturing, you should consider transparent masks or visors. Do check that any deaf student is still able to lip-read you comfortably with a transparent mask because some steam up easily.

Providing materials in advance

It can be very challenging for some deaf students to take notes during lectures as they are focusing on lip-reading or watching an interpreter. Some students may have notetakers to support them. However, a notetaker or other support workers such as sign language interpreters may not have strong knowledge of the subject being taught.

It can therefore be important to provide deaf students and their support workers copies of handouts, PowerPoint slides and lecture notes before a lecture. This helps them prepare effectively for the lecture and make sure that they are familiar with the technical terms that will be used.

Providing subtitled video clips

Make sure that any video clips you show are subtitled as some deaf students won't be able to follow a video clip without subtitles. If no subtitles are available, you should provide a transcript. Even if they have communication support, a deaf student will often prefer subtitles as interpreters or electronic notetakers may struggle to keep pace with a video, and deaf students will have to look away from the screen to follow what's being said.

There's an automatic subtitling function for YouTube videos, but these can be full of errors. Make sure you check the quality of subtitles before showing a clip.



For information on how to subtitle YouTube videos, visit support.google.com/youtube/answer/2734796.

Making sure students can take part in group work

A quiet area is best for group discussion. You should arrange seating so that the deaf young person can see the other students, such as in a circle or horseshoe shape. People should speak one at a time and raise their hand so that the deaf student can identify who's speaking.

Bear in mind that if the student is using communication support, there'll be a gap in time between someone speaking and this being communicated to the deaf student, so they may lose the opportunity to take part in the discussion. If you think this is happening, you could invite the deaf student to contribute.

“This year especially... there's so much of your marks on participation. And obviously that's really difficult. I always try to make sure to speak a lot but... if you don't hear what this person's saying and then that [leads into] the conversation by that person... it's nearly impossible actually to contribute sometimes.” *Chloe, deaf young person*

Making remote learning accessible

Accessing online lectures and seminars can be more challenging for deaf students. Lip-reading off a computer screen is harder than in person. When slides are shown, a speaker's face can be very small on the screen. Using British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters online can require more concentration and depend on having a good quality internet connection.

If you have a deaf student in an online seminar, make sure you do the following:

- Use a good quality microphone to make your speech as clear as possible. It can also improve the accuracy of automatic captions if a student is using these.
- Make sure your face is visible when speaking and encourage students to switch on their cameras when they speak.
- When slides are not needed, do not screen-share. This will allow you and other students to be much more visible.
- If automatic captions are used, switch them on yourself so that you can see how accurate your speech appears in the captions. Repeat or type out any important sentences or references if they don't appear clearly.
- If you have a student using sign language interpreters, make sure their interpreters are always visible (for example, by 'pinning' the interpreter or allowing a student to 'multi-pin').
- Make sure any support workers have separate access to the seminar (that is, they are not blocked from joining because they are not a registered student or member of staff).

Many universities are now providing automatic captions for online lectures. These can assist comprehension of what is being said, but they tend to have high error rates. They risk students misunderstanding key information in lectures and becoming quickly fatigued through mentally processing the errors.

It is good practice to edit automatic captions so that they have greater accuracy. Some institutions pay third-year students or postgraduates to edit captions so that they are fully accurate.

Making assessments fair

You are required to make reasonable adjustments to make sure deaf students are assessed equally. Many deaf students will have access arrangements for examinations, and an outline of these arrangements can be found on page 23.

Deaf students should be allowed to use alternative methods to complete assignments where appropriate. For example, an essay assignment could be delivered in video format through BSL.

Students who don't use speech should be able to use sign language interpreters for oral presentations. A fully qualified interpreter should be able to represent a student well through their voice-over.

Deaf students may be more likely to misunderstand an essay question due to the way it's worded. Students should have the opportunity to check they fully understand what is being asked of them.

For example, an essay question might read: "Women face a glass ceiling in achieving management jobs.' Please state whether you agree with this statement and outline your reasons why, referring to sound sources of evidence." 'Glass ceiling' is an example of a saying that may not be used much

amongst deaf students, who can find it harder to pick up expressions of speech. It is not an expression that is used in BSL so could be problematic for some BSL users. Additionally, the word 'sound' may be taken to refer to noise rather than accuracy.

The same question could be worded in this way: “‘Women find it more difficult to get managerial jobs.’ Please state whether you agree with this statement and explain your reasons why. Please refer to accurate sources of evidence to support your reasons.”

The role of personal tutors

It will be important for a personal tutor to understand a deaf student's needs, and they may benefit from deaf awareness training before meeting them for the first time. This training can be delivered by an external organisation, such as a private company or charity, or by a member of staff at your institution who has the relevant expertise.



You can see the training we offer for professionals by going to ndcs.org.uk/training.

Tutorials should be held in an appropriate environment with minimum background noise. Giving the student plenty of notice before a meeting will help them to make sure that communication support can be booked in time, if they need it.



5

Funded support for deaf students

‘Non-medical helper’ is the term used to describe support funded through Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA). For deaf students, this support can include one or more of the following.

Manual notetakers

A deaf student who is concentrating on listening and lip-reading or watching an interpreter will find it very difficult to take notes at the same time. A notetaker provides a written account of what was said in a lecture, seminar or tutorial. Depending on what the student prefers, the format of the notes can vary from a detailed account to making annotations on lecture handouts. They may make use of colour or mind-mapping skills.

Some notetakers will have undertaken specialist training so that they can adapt the language used within their notes to meet the needs of the deaf student. In England, DSA funding is now only available to pay notetakers with specialist training.

A Level 3 Certificate in Notetaking Skills for Support Staff is available for those working with deaf learners from qualifications provider, Laser.

Electronic notetakers

An electronic notetaker types a non-verbatim transcript of what’s being said into a laptop or live webpage that a student can see, using special software. Electronic notetakers should also have a specialist qualification.

If the student requires a word-for-word account of a lecture or seminar, then they may use a speech-to-text reporter (otherwise known as a palantypist) who is able to type at the speed of normal speech.

Sign language interpreters

A sign language interpreter interprets what’s said into British Sign Language (BSL). Their role may involve providing a voice-over, particularly if a deaf student doesn’t have clear speech. They may also translate written language into sign language in some situations or vice-versa.

Interpreters would not normally assist a deaf student in completing tasks, provide explanations or advocate for the student. This means their role differs significantly from that of a communication support worker.

Fully qualified interpreters will have BSL Level 6 (or equivalent) and an interpreting qualification. They should be registered with the National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) or an equivalent body.

Communication support workers (CSWs)

A CSW is suitable for deaf students who require more flexible communication support rather than someone with a fixed role such as a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or notetaker. Their tasks might include BSL interpreting, notetaking, prompting and adapting learning materials.

CSWs should ideally have a qualification in providing communication support (for example, Signature Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support for Deaf Learners).

Most CSWs are not qualified to provide BSL interpreting at a level required for higher education. Where a student's preferred method of communication is sign language, a CSW should have a Level 6 BSL qualification as a minimum.

Lipspeakers

A lipspeaker is trained to repeat what's being said without using their voice and using optimum lip movements that will aid lip-reading. Depending on the needs of the deaf person, a lipspeaker may use some basic signs as well. It's recommended that lipspeakers are registered with the National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD).

Language support tutors/Teacher of the Deaf (ToD)

(Described as 'Specialist Support Professional for students with Sensory Impairments' within DSA guidance for England.)

Tutors with a specialism in deafness work in higher education to support deaf students by:

- modifying or explaining the language used in course materials so that it's easier to understand
- giving support in structuring and preparing for assignments
- helping students to develop strategies that overcome barriers to learning
- providing advice about radio aids, other technology and audiology.

If appropriate, they should have the British Sign Language (BSL) skills necessary to support their student effectively.

6 Technology support

This chapter has information about types of technology that deaf students can use in learning environments. Remember, no technology can replace normal hearing, and some students will still need to lip-read you as well as use the technology.

Radio aids

Radio aids make it easier for some deaf students to hear their tutor or lecturer, especially if there is background noise. A radio aid consists of two parts:

- a transmitter worn by the lecturer
- a receiver worn by the student.

A radio aid carries your voice directly through radio waves to the student's receiver, which is attached to their hearing aid, bone conduction hearing device or cochlear implant.

You or the student should seek advice from the company selling the radio aid or a qualified Teacher of the Deaf about what system best suits the needs of the student, and how it should be used and maintained.

Similar to radio aids are personal listeners which are small personal amplifiers used for communicating with others in noisy environments or during group activities.

i When using radio aids, you should:

- make sure the transmitter is switched on
- wear the microphone about 15cm from your mouth
- avoid letting the microphone knock against any clothing or jewellery
- avoid standing in a spot where the microphone will pick up a lot of background noise (for example, next to an open window).

Soundfield system

A soundfield system can make it easier for a student to hear your voice wherever you are in the room. Your voice is transmitted via a microphone to a base station placed within the room. This amplifies and enhances the speech and then broadcasts it from speakers positioned around the room. Portable systems are available which can be moved from room to room.

Loop systems

Loop systems work by reducing background noise. They're not widely used in education settings but may be available in some lecture theatres.

A microphone picks up sound from a person speaking (or a radio or TV) and feeds it to a wire loop running around a room. The student will then switch their hearing aid or cochlear implant to the 'T setting' so that it picks up sound from the loop. If your building has a hearing loop, facilities staff should make sure that the systems are switched on and in working order. Portable loop systems are sometimes used at reception desks and can be moved from place to place.

Acoustics and background noise

No technology can replace normal hearing, and the acoustics within a building can make it difficult for deaf students to make the best use of their hearing technologies.

i You can reduce echo and reverberation and improve the acoustic quality of teaching spaces by:

- using rooms with low ceilings with acoustic tiles
- closing doors to noisy areas or corridors
- closing windows to outside noise and closing curtains/blinds if necessary
- positioning full bookshelves and cupboards against partition walls (to minimise noise transfer from other rooms)
- introducing plenty of soft surfaces, such as wall displays
- making sure heating and air conditioning systems are regularly maintained so that noise levels aren't too loud
- fitting carpets, blinds or curtains at windows
- turning off IT equipment, such as computers, when not in use.

7

Access arrangements for assessments

Many deaf students will be entitled to adjustments to exams or coursework so that they are not unfairly disadvantaged in assessments. You should agree any arrangements with the student early in the course, particularly if there is a coursework or modular element to the assessment process.

Extra time

For exams this is usually 25%. You may also agree extended coursework deadlines if the student requires extra time for support from a language support tutor or a Teacher of the Deaf.

Adjusted papers

This is when a Teacher of the Deaf or language support tutor modifies exam questions so that they are in clear and simple English. A student may wish to see both the original paper and the adjusted one in an exam.

British Sign Language (BSL)

Some students will best understand and answer exam questions using BSL and may use an interpreter and scribe (someone who writes down what the student says rather than them writing down the answers themselves) in exams. They could also complete coursework assignments by filming themselves using BSL. 1,000 words is approximate to 10 minutes of signed work.

Transcripts/live speakers

A student may need a transcript or live speaker (someone reading the transcript) for any listening component to an exam.

Oral language modifiers (OLMs)

OLMs are trained to respond to requests to clarify language used in exam questions. They will not explain any technical terms.

“I have a notetaker and interpreter. I need a notetaker for my lectures because I can’t watch the interpreter and write notes at the same time. I have asked to see if I can sign my essays to an interpreter. Of course, I have to do research before answering the essay question. The university is happy with this.” Adam, deaf young person



8

Work placements, apprenticeships and study abroad

Work placements

If a deaf student's course involves a work placement, you should make sure it will be accessible. Encourage the student to visit their employer before starting the placement to discuss their access needs and make sure that any reasonable adjustments will be in place for when they start.



You can refer employers to our guidance at ndcs.org.uk/make-your-workplace-deaf-inclusive.

For placements where students are paid at or above the national minimum wage, they will be entitled to apply for Access to Work funding to pay for the costs of communication support or equipment.



See gov.uk/access-to-work for more information.

Higher apprenticeships

Disabled Students' Allowance does not cover support funding for apprenticeships. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, a higher education institution can apply for learning support funding from the Government to cover the cost of any support required for learning, including communication support. In Scotland, no learning support funding is available.

A deaf apprentice can apply to the Access to Work scheme to cover the cost of any communication support required while in work or in training. There is also partial funding for equipment such as radio aids. For apprenticeships with small employers, equipment costs can be covered in full. However, Access to Work will not cover support for learning such as that provided from sensory support professionals or study support tutors.

While deaf apprentices are responsible for applying to Access to Work (training providers cannot do it on their behalf), it is not the sole responsibility of an apprentice to secure their own support. You must understand whether the support provided through Access to Work will meet an apprentice's learning needs and address any gaps in support. There can be delays in confirming an Access to Work support package, and while the costs of support can be back-claimed to the start of an apprenticeship, higher education providers may need to secure communication support while waiting for an agreement to be finalised.

In England, end-point assessment providers may need to be made aware of any reasonable adjustments they should make for assessments. You should discuss with apprentices any potential barriers to a fair assessment and offer to liaise with the assessment centre on their behalf.

Studying abroad

Deaf students should also have the opportunity to complete modules at overseas universities (if this is offered on their course). To make sure the placement is successful, you and the deaf student should consider:

- the support offered by the overseas institution
- that the quality of services for deaf people can vary from country to country
- that other countries use sign languages different from British Sign Language.

9 Social support

Deaf students are at risk of being socially isolated if their hearing peers don't understand how to communicate with them. It can be difficult for deaf people to take part in group conversations as it's easy to lose track of what's being discussed when trying to lip-read more than one person. In research carried out by the University of Edinburgh, two-thirds of young people said they had been bullied or isolated because they were deaf.⁵

i Many students consider their social experience to be an important part of university life, and deaf students are no exception. You can help facilitate friendships and make sure a deaf student doesn't feel isolated by:

- setting up a 'deaf awareness' session to help make sure that other students and staff on their course or in their place of residence are aware of the deaf young person's needs. You should ask the deaf student if they'd like to be involved in the training.
- making sure that communication support is available so that they can access induction events where they meet other students
- offering to introduce them to other deaf students at the university/college (or at a nearby one).

“I told them what I needed, like how I needed help in how to communicate. I told the class as well, just repeat what you say and use hand signals etc, etc. That was a lot more eye opening as well, because my peers and my tutors were a lot more friendly and approachable.” *Ava, deaf young person*

5. Fordyce et al. Post-School Transitions for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. 2013. Centre for Research in Education, Inclusion and Diversity (CREID) at the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Counselling services

The counselling service at your institution should be open to deaf students. This may mean making sure counsellors understand the deaf student's communication needs and that communication support is provided if necessary.

If a deaf student experiences difficulties that are complex and relate specifically to being deaf, your institution's counselling service (or other support) might not be able to adequately address their needs and you should refer the student to other agencies. For example, you could refer them to social services for deaf people or local mental health services.



10 Accomodation

Accommodation providers, both university-owned and private, are responsible for putting in place any adaptations to accommodation that a deaf student may need if living away from home.

Deaf people do not tend to wear hearing aids or cochlear implants when asleep. Where a student cannot hear a fire alarm while asleep, a hall of residence or student flat should have a fire system that alerts a student through flashing lights and vibrating pads that go under a pillow. Alternatively, a pager system could be used.

 For more information, go to ndcs.org.uk/fire-safety.

Flashing doorbells can also be put in place to alert deaf students to visitors.





11

Supporting the transition to employment

Deaf people are employed in a wide range of job roles, from CEOs to nurses and engineers – most careers are open to them. However, six months after graduating, deaf graduates are more likely to be unemployed than their hearing peers.⁶

Higher education careers advisers providing guidance to deaf students should be aware of the following:

- The basic rights of disabled people within employment under the Equality Act 2010⁷ (Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland).⁸
- Health and safety concerns can be overcome by making reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act. There is no health or safety legislation that would prevent a disabled person from finding or staying in employment.
- Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is also available to students on postgraduate courses.

The Government's Access to Work scheme can provide employers and self-employed deaf people with funding to cover the costs of support and equipment required due to their disability.



For more information, visit [gov.uk/access-to-work/overview](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview).

6. Equality Challenge Unit (2016). Equality in Higher Education: Students statistical report 2016.

7. Equality and Human Rights Commission and Government Equalities Office. Equality Act 2010: A guidance'. [gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance).

8. Disability Discrimination Act 1995. [legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents)



Appendix A: Making sure deaf students are included

How you can make sure that deaf students are fully included in any lecture, seminar or tutorial. We use the term 'deaf' to describe all levels of hearing loss from mild to profound.

i When talking to students in lectures or seminars:

- Make sure your face is visible and well-lit at all times and avoid turning your back to your students.
- Speak at an average pace – you don't need to slow down unless you tend to speak at a very fast pace, which may make it difficult for a deaf student to lip-read you or for communication support to keep up.
- Keep background noise to a minimum.

i When using audio or video materials:

- Make sure that the student has access to a transcript or subtitles.
- Pause briefly when showing slides so that a deaf student can read them before lip-reading you or watching their communication support worker.
- If a student uses communication support, provide these staff with presentations and handouts in advance to help them prepare.

i When facilitating seminar or tutorial discussions:

- Make sure students talk one at a time.
- Repeat or paraphrase any questions or comments from other students.
- Make sure a deaf student has the opportunity to contribute – they may find it harder to come into a discussion at the right time, particularly if they use communication support.

 **When talking to a student one-to-one:**

- Don't panic if you're not understood – repeat what you've said and consider rephrasing it.
- If you don't understand what the student has said, don't be embarrassed to ask them to repeat it.
- Avoid using jargon, abbreviations and slang.
- Meet in a quiet and well-lit environment.
- If the deaf student is using communication support, speak directly to the deaf student and not their support worker.

Deaf students are a diverse group with different needs, so the guidance above may not apply to all deaf students. However, you may find our tips useful if you have a deaf student on your course. Many of the tips will benefit all students on the course.

 More detailed information can be found at ndcs.org.uk/professionals.

Appendix B: Making sure deaf students can access student services

We use the term 'deaf' to describe all levels of hearing loss from mild to profound.

i When talking to a student one-to-one:

- Don't panic if you're not understood – repeat what you've said and consider rephrasing it.
- If you don't understand what the student has said, don't be embarrassed to ask them to repeat it.
- Avoid using jargon, abbreviations and slang.
- Meet in a quiet and well-lit environment.
- If the deaf student is using communication support, speak directly to the deaf student and not their support worker.

i When contacting a student:

- Make sure you can be contacted in alternative ways such as text message or email – some deaf students are unable to use a telephone.
- Make sure you use plain language and break up an email into paragraphs to make it easier to read.

 **When booking communication support:**

- Ask the student if they would like communication support and what type of support they would prefer (for example, British Sign Language interpreter, speech-to-text reporter, lipspeaker).
- Check with your institution's disability officer who can be booked if Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) will be funding the communication support.

Deaf students are a diverse group with different needs, so the guidance above may not apply to all deaf students. However, you may find our tips useful if you are supporting a deaf student.

 More detailed information can be found at ndcs.org.uk/professionals.

Appendix C: Identifying needs checklist for disability advisers

| Communication | |
|--|--|
| Information required | Implications for planning support |
| <p>Preferred way of communicating in different situations (in lectures/tutorials and with friends).</p> <p>Competence in preferred way of communicating (for example, fluency in British Sign Language (BSL) or written language).</p> | <p>What needs to be done to support access to teaching and learning, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where the student should sit so that they can lip-read • providing appropriate communication support • advice/training for lecturers and tutors • what technology would be appropriate (radio aids, soundfield system). |
| Hearing and hearing technology | |
| Information required | Implications for planning support |
| <p>Level and type of deafness.</p> <p>Ability to access speech sounds in different environments.</p> <p>Personal hearing technology used.</p> | <p>What needs to be done to improve listening conditions, if required? For example, using radio aids, improving acoustics, using soundfield systems.</p> <p>What needs to be done to ensure health and safety requirements are met? For example, access to fire drills.</p> <p>Do staff working with the student understand the limitations of technology and impact of deafness?</p> |

| Language | |
|--|---|
| Information required | Implications for planning support |
| Written language competences – vocabulary level, grammar and level of expressive language. | <p>Does the student require language support for written assignments and research?</p> <p>Do they require more processing time for assignments and exams?</p> |
| Social and emotional aspects | |
| Information required | Implications for planning support |
| Ease in forming social relationships with hearing people. | <p>Would other students benefit from deaf awareness training?</p> <p>Is communication support required so that the student can take part in social activities organised by your institution?</p> <p>Can you signpost the student to social groups where they can meet other deaf people or introduce them to other deaf students?</p> |

Our information and support

About the National Deaf Children's Society

We support deaf young people up to the age of 25 – no matter what their level or type of deafness or how they communicate. We want to work with professionals like you to overcome the barriers that hold deaf young people back.

Visit our website ndcs.org.uk to join us for free. You'll have access to:

- information resources for professionals
- our quarterly digital magazine and email updates
- workshops and events
- our Freephone Helpline.

About the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP)

This resource has been developed by the National Deaf Children's Society with support from the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP). NatSIP is a partnership of organisations working together to improve outcomes for children and young people with sensory impairment (SI). NatSIP receives funding from the Department for Education (DfE) in England for the provision of specialist information, advice, support and training.



For more information about NatSIP and to access resources, visit natsip.org.uk – a major gateway for SI professional practice.

About the Consortium for Higher Education Support Services for deaf students (CHESS)

CHESS is a voluntary organisation of higher education professionals working with and supporting deaf and hard of hearing students. Anyone is welcome to join; members are affiliated via CHESSFORUM (www.jiscmail.ac.uk), a discussion list where issues and questions are raised regarding the support of deaf students. This allows members to exchange knowledge and ideas promptly and effectively in a mutually discursive environment.

**We are the National Deaf Children's Society,
the leading charity for deaf children.**

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Full references for this resource are available by emailing informationteam@ndcs.org.uk.

Give us your feedback by emailing your comments to informationteam@ndcs.org.uk



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