FACTSHEET
Communication

Working with a speech-to-text reporter

You’ll find this factsheet useful if you want to find out more about working with a speech-to-text reporter (STTR) – whether you have hearing loss or are looking to book the service for someone else.

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If you’d like this factsheet in Braille, large print or audio, please contact our Information Line – see last page for contact details.
What does a speech-to-text reporter (STTR) do?

An STTR – sometimes called a palantypist or stenographer – provides communication support to people with hearing loss. They type every word that’s spoken in a meeting or conference, and the text appears on a laptop screen for the person with hearing loss to read. The text can also be projected onto a large screen or onto other monitors, if more than one person wants to read it.

STTRs manage to keep up with the speed of spoken English by using systems called Palantype® or Stenograph®. These systems have an electronic shorthand keyboard, which lets the STTR type words phonetically (how they sound rather than how they are spelt). A computer software program immediately converts the text back into English, before it’s shown on the screen.

Remote speech-to-text reporting

Although most speech-to-text reporting is done face to face, some STTRs now offer remote services. The STTR will listen in to a meeting using a telephone link and will send the text directly to a computer using secure screenshare software.

Transcripts

If you want a transcript (record) of what’s been said during the meeting – on paper or on a disk – you can ask for one, but you usually have to pay extra for this. However, an STTR can refuse to give you a transcript.

Before a transcript is given to anyone other than the person using the service, the STTR must first check with them or the person organising or paying for the service, in case there are any confidentiality issues.

Who is an STTR suitable for?

Speech-to-text reporting is suitable for people with hearing loss who are comfortable reading English, often at high speed and sometimes for up to a couple of hours at a time.
When is an STTR needed?

STTRs can be needed in many situations, such as:

- job interviews
- work meetings
- training courses
- university or college lectures or seminars
- medical consultations
- meetings with bank managers, solicitors or local government officials.

Remember that an STTR needs a table and an electrical socket for the equipment they use, so they might not be able to work everywhere.

Who pays for communication support?

Under the Equality Act (the Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland), private, public and voluntary sectors need to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ so that people who are disabled aren’t placed at a substantial disadvantage. These adjustments can include providing equipment and communication support, such as a speech-to-text reporter, for their employees or those who use their services who have hearing loss.

Public services, organisations and businesses may be able to get government funding to help cover the costs of any equipment and communication support needed by their employees or those who use their services (see below).

People who need communication support for private events, such as family gatherings, may need to book and pay for it themselves.

You can find out more about the Equality Act in our Your rights range of factsheets.

At work

Access to Work is a government-run scheme that provides practical advice and support to people who are disabled and their employers. It may help to pay for any communication support and equipment that people with hearing loss need at interviews and in the workplace. It’s usually the employer who arranges and pays for the support – they then claim back the approved costs from Access to Work.

Large organisations and businesses may need to contribute towards the cost of the equipment and communication support.

Find out more at gov.uk/access-to-work or at nidirect.gov.uk if you live in Northern Ireland.

In education

Schools and colleges should arrange, and pay for, communication support for students with hearing loss in primary, secondary and further education.

Students with hearing loss in higher education should be able to get Disabled
Working with a speech-to-text reporter

Students’ Allowances (DSAs) to pay for any communication support and equipment that they need.

All institutions will have a student support or disability office that you can contact for further information.

To find out more about DSAs, contact your national student finance body (see pages 6–7).

When using health and social care services

National guidance and quality standards aim to improve the accessibility of NHS and social care services for people who are deaf or have hearing loss. Any communication support needed should be provided, and paid for, by these services.

For more information, and to find out about our campaign to improve access to healthcare, visit actiononhearingloss.org.uk/ontherecord

How do I book an STTR?

If you’re booking an STTR on behalf of someone, first check with them that this is their preferred type of communication support.

Almost all STTRs work for agencies. The following organisations can help:

- The Action on Hearing Loss Access Solutions team can book an STTR for you.
- The Association of Verbatim Speech-to-Text Reporters (AVSTTR) is the professional body representing STTRs in the UK and has an online directory of STTRs.
- The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) has an online search facility to help you find an STTR.

You can find contact details for these organisations on page 6.

We recommend that you book an STTR about 4–6 weeks in advance. If you need one in an emergency, let an agency know and they’ll do their best to find someone.

Always book a registered STTR

Make sure that the STTR you book is registered with NRCPD. You can do this by checking online at nrcpd.org.uk

NRCPD registration guarantees that the STTR has the relevant qualifications and works to a strict code of conduct. They are also subject to the NRCPD complaints procedure. STTRs should also follow codes of practice from the Association of Verbatim Speech-to-Text Reporters (see page 6 for contact details).
How many STTRs should I book?

When booking, ask for advice on whether you’ll need one or two STTRs. For an event such as a full-day conference, with few breaks between speakers and where presentations are highly technical, you’ll need two STTRs. For a two-hour meeting between two people, you’ll usually need just one STTR.

Remember, an STTR needs breaks throughout the day to provide a professional and accurate service. You shouldn’t expect them to work through lunch and coffee breaks unless you’ve agreed this with them beforehand.

You also shouldn’t expect an STTR to work very long hours, as their concentration and ability to type quickly and accurately will suffer.

How much do STTRs charge?

Agencies usually charge a booking fee and have a minimum call-out charge. This means you might be charged for a minimum of half a day, even if you use the STTR for just an hour.

Check the minimum call-out charge before you book and ask about any additional costs, such as travel, accommodation and copies of transcriptions.

What else should I consider?

Preparation materials

Let the STTR know what the assignment will be in advance, so they can customise their computer dictionary. Send the agency or freelance STTR copies of papers, teaching materials or any other relevant information at least two weeks before the assignment, to make sure that the STTR’s transcription is accurate.

Working environment

Make sure the room is set up for the STTR. For example, check if they need you to link up monitors, and that the electrical socket is convenient for them to plug in their equipment. They will also need a table and a comfortable chair, without arms. Those using the communication support will need to sit next to the STTR if they are reading from the laptop screen, or near the big screen if they are reading from that.

Deaf awareness training

We offer flexible training options to meet your organisation’s specific requirements. To find out more, contact our Access Solutions team:

Telephone: 0333 240 5658
(calls welcome via the Next Generation Text Service)
Email: access.solutions@hearingloss.org.uk
Website: actiononhearingloss.org.uk/business
Where can I get more information about communication support?

Action on Hearing Loss

The other factsheets in our Communication range are:

- Booking a sign language interpreter
- Working with a communication support worker
- Working with a lipspeaker
- Working with a notetaker
- Communication support for people who are deafblind
- Careers supporting people who are deaf.

You can order these from our Information Line (see last page) or download them from our website at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/factsheets

Access Solutions

To book communication support through Action on Hearing Loss, contact our Access Solutions team:

Telephone: 0845 685 8000
Textphone: 0845 685 8001
Email: communication.services@hearingloss.org.uk

You can also book online at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/communication

Other organisations

Association of Verbatim Speech-to-text reporters (AVSTTR)

The professional association representing speech-to-text reporters who work with people who are deaf.

Email: enquiries@avsttr.org.uk
Website: avsttr.org.uk

Student Finance England

Telephone: 0300 100 0607
Textphone: 0300 100 0622
Website: gov.uk/student-finance-register-login

Student Finance NI

Telephone: 0300 100 0077
Telephone (postgraduate tuition fee loan enquiries): 0300 100 0493
Website: studentfinanceni.co.uk

Student Awards Agency for Scotland

Website: saas.gov.uk
For contact details, click on the ‘Contact us’ tab on the home page and follow the instructions.
Student Finance Wales

Telephone: 0300 200 4050
Textphone: 0300 100 1693
Telephone (postgraduate loan enquiries): 0300 100 0494
Textphone (postgraduate loan enquiries): 0300 100 1693
Website: studentfinancewales.co.uk

The National Registers for Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD)

NRCPD regulate communication and language professionals who work with deaf and deafblind people. It holds registers of interpreters for deafblind people, lipspeakers, notetakers, sign language interpreters, sign language translators and speech to text reporters.

Telephone: 0191 383 1155
SMS: 07974 121 594
Email: enquiries@nrcpd.org.uk
Website: nrcpd.org.uk

Information you can trust

We are certified by The Information Standard as a producer of high-quality, evidence-based information.

Did you find this factsheet helpful?

We’d love to know what you think of this factsheet – please email us at reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk

If you’d like to join our Readers’ Panel, to help us create new publications and improve existing ones, please let us know.
Further information from Action on Hearing Loss

Our expert information covers everything you need to know about:

- hearing loss and deafness
- tinnitus
- ear problems and treatments
- hearing aids and cochlear implants
- useful products and technology
- communication tactics and support
- benefits and grants
- your rights.

Visit our website actiononhearingloss.org.uk or call our Information Line (see last page) for information, support and publications. You can also find out about services in your area, our hearing research, and how you can get involved.

Please help us support others

We provide our leaflets, factsheets and Information Line service free of charge to anyone affected by deafness, tinnitus or hearing loss in the UK. We rely on the generosity of our supporters to help us do this. We would be very grateful if you would consider making a donation – of as little or as much as you can afford.

Please send a cheque, payable to Action on Hearing Loss, to:

Freepost RTLX-CZXX-BTTZ
Action on Hearing Loss
1-3 Highbury Station Road
London N1 1SE
(No stamp needed)

Donate online at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/icanhelp
Or make a donation over the phone by credit or debit card:

📞 0203 227 6182
✉️ 0203 227 6185

Thank you.
Our purpose is to help people confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss to live the life they choose. We enable them to take control of their lives and remove the barriers in their way.

To find out more about what we do and how you can support us, go to actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss Information Line

Telephone 0808 808 0123
Textphone 0808 808 9000
SMS 0780 000 0360
(standard text message rates apply)
Email information@hearingloss.org.uk

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@ActionOnHearing