


# Using communication support

 **ACTION ON  
HEARING  
LOSS**

A national charity since 1911



Formerly  
**RNID** • )))



“I was born profoundly Deaf and my first language is British Sign Language (BSL). I use BSL interpreters in all aspects of my job: during meetings, when making telephone calls and when networking, etc. I also use them to access job interviews and GP and hospital appointments.

Communication support removes the communication barriers I face as a Deaf person. Having an interpreter lets me communicate effectively with hearing people; I can express my opinion confidently, knowing my point is being translated, and hearing people can do the same.

Without an interpreter, I'd find it hard to communicate with the general population. I'd have to rely on lipreading, which I'm no good at, or writing down notes, which limits my ability to communicate well.”

Seán Curran, West Yorkshire

This leaflet tells you about the different types of communication support available for people who have hearing loss or are deaf or deafblind.

## Contents

- What is communication support?..... 4
- Who pays for communication support? ..... 4
- What communication support is available? ..... 6
  - Sign language interpreters..... 6
  - Interpreters and communicator guides for people who are deafblind ..... 7
  - Lipspeakers ..... 8
  - Speech-to-text reporters (STTRs) ..... 8
  - Electronic notetakers ..... 9
  - Manual notetakers ..... 10
- How do I book communication support? ..... 11
- How can I make sure I get a good service?..... 12
- Where can I get more information and support? ..... 14

**Please let our Information Line know if you'd like this leaflet in large print, braille or audio (see back page for contact details).**

## What is communication support?

Communication support helps people who are deaf or have hearing loss to communicate effectively with people who are hearing. There are different types of communication support provided by different communication professionals.

If you are deaf or have hearing loss, employers and public service providers need to arrange communication support for you in situations such as:

- job interviews
- work meetings
- training courses
- university or college lectures or seminars
- GP, optician or hospital appointments
- meetings with bank managers, solicitors and government officials.

Public services are services provided by, or run on behalf of, the government – for example, NHS services, schools and universities.

If you are deafblind (have both sight loss and hearing loss), you can also get communication support to help you with your daily routine ([see page 7](#)).

## Who pays for communication support?

Equality law means that, in most cases, employers and public service providers need to pay for the communication support that their employees, or people using their services, need.

Schools and colleges are responsible for providing communication support for pupils and students up until they finish their further education (A-levels or vocational courses).

But if you're in higher education (post-18 learning), you'll need to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) to help cover the cost of any communication support you need.

## Access to Work

The government's Access to Work scheme can help your employer to cover the cost of any communication support and specialist equipment that you need to do your job. You'll need to apply for the grant and an Access to Work adviser will contact you to discuss your needs.

You or your employer will pay for the communication support you need and Access to Work will pay the money back, up to the amount of the grant you've been offered. You can also apply to the Access to Work scheme if you need communication support while looking for work – for example, at a job interview.



To find out more, visit [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), or [nidirect.gov.uk](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk) if you live in Northern Ireland, and search for 'Access to Work'.

### Are you an employer?

Our **Workplace Assessments** can offer practical advice on what support and equipment can help your staff who are deaf or have hearing loss. They'll also make sure that you, as an employer, are fulfilling your obligations to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act (the Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland).

Find out more at [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/workplace-assessments](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/workplace-assessments)

# What communication support is available?

There's a range of communication support available, to help people with different communication needs in different situations.

You can find out more about all of the communication support services described in this leaflet in our **Communication** factsheets. You can find these on our website at [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/publications](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/publications) or order them from our Information Line (see [back page](#) for contact details).

Always check that the communication professional you book is appropriately qualified and registered. We explain how to do this on [pages 12–13](#).

## Sign language interpreters

Sign language interpreters enable communication between Deaf sign language users and hearing people. In Great Britain, most people who use sign language use British Sign Language (BSL), but in Northern Ireland, Irish Sign Language (ISL) is also used.

Before booking an interpreter, check that they are registered with either the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) or the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) – see [page 13](#) for contact details.



See our factsheet *Working with a sign language interpreter*.

## Video interpreting

Although most interpreting is done face to face, some organisations now offer a video interpreting service. This can be helpful if you need an interpreter at short notice or for brief appointments. You can use the service if you have a computer or tablet device with a webcam and an internet connection, or a videophone.


## Interpreters and communicator guides for people who are deafblind

Interpreters and communicator guides help people who are deafblind and people who are hearing to communicate with each other. They work with a range of communication methods, including:

- BSL
- hands-on signing – some people who were born deaf and then experience sight loss as an adult continue to use sign language when they can no longer follow visual signs, by touching the hands of the person who's signing and following their movements
- the block alphabet – this is when a hearing person uses the tip of their forefinger to spell out each word in English, in block capitals, on the receiver's palm
- the deafblind manual alphabet – this involves spelling out words on someone's hand using the BSL fingerspelling alphabet.

Interpreters provide support in formal settings, such as training courses and medical appointments. Make sure you book an interpreter for deafblind people who is registered with NRCPD or SASLI ([see page 13](#) for contact details).

Communicator guides work more informally, helping with everyday activities such as shopping and dealing with mail.

 To find out more, see our factsheet *Communication support for people who are deafblind*.

## Lipspeakers

Lipspeakers work with people who are deaf or have hearing loss who prefer to communicate through lipreading and speech. To use a lipspeaker, you need to be a confident lipreader with good English skills.

Lipspeakers:

- repeat what is said without using their voice, so you can lipread them easily
- produce the shape of words clearly, with the flow, rhythm and phrasing of speech
- use natural gestures and facial expressions to help you follow what's being said
- may also use fingerspelling if you ask them to.

Before booking, check that the lipspeaker is registered with NRCPD (see page 13).

 See our factsheet *Working with a lipspeaker*.

## Speech-to-text reporters (STTRs)

Speech-to-text reporting is suitable for people who are deaf or have hearing loss and are comfortable reading English, often at high speed and sometimes for up to a couple of hours at a time. An STTR types every word that's spoken and the text appears on a laptop screen, or on one large screen or more if several people are using the service.



STTRs manage to keep up with the speed of spoken English by using special shorthand keyboards. They type words phonetically – how they sound rather than how they are spelled. A computer software program immediately converts the text back into English, before it's shown on the screen.

## Remote STTRs

Some STTRs work remotely (from home or another office). They use a telephone link to listen in to the meeting, and send the text directly to a computer screen, or other suitable device, using secure, screenshare software. However, this option isn't suitable for sensitive situations, where a misunderstanding could have serious results, such as during legal meetings.

Before booking, check that the STTR is registered with NRCPD ([see page 13](#)).



See our factsheet *Working with a speech-to-text reporter*.

## Electronic notetakers

Electronic notetakers work with people who are deaf or have hearing loss and are comfortable reading English. They type a real-time summary of what's being said on a laptop computer. You can then read this information on a screen in front of you.

Electronic notetaking means you have fewer words to read compared with speech-to-text reporting, and you won't get a full word-for-word report. If you'd like to read everything that's said, choose an STTR instead.

## Manual notetakers

Manual notetakers take handwritten notes in meetings, on courses and at other events for people who are deaf or have hearing loss and are comfortable reading English.

Some manual notetakers use a digital pen to take notes. The pen writes with ink on paper, but it also captures handwriting and turns it into data that's displayed as text when transferred to a computer. This type of notetaking combines the ease of handwritten notes with the convenience of electronic notes (you can have both sets of notes).

Before booking, check that the notetaker is appropriately qualified.



See our factsheet *Working with a notetaker*.

### Using a notetaker

It's quite common to use a notetaker alongside another communication support service. For example, if you're watching a sign language interpreter or lipspeaker, it would be impossible for you to take notes and follow what's being said at the same time.

Notetakers may specialise in a particular field. If you're taking a science degree, for example, it's important that your notetaker knows something about the subject. For this reason, you may need to spend time finding the right notetaker to support you.

## How do I book communication support?

Ask your employer, or the service provider, what their procedures are for booking communication support – you might not need to book it yourself.

Communication support can be arranged through professional bodies, local organisations, public services and charities, including Action on Hearing Loss ([see page 12](#)). Please check that the organisation you use only supplies appropriately qualified and registered professionals.

If you're booking communication support on behalf of someone else, always check what their preferred type of support is first.

### Making your booking

Communication support services are in demand, so book early.

Give as much information about the assignment as you can, including:

- the date, time, duration, venue and number of people attending
- whether it's an interview, meeting or conference.

You'll also need to provide preparation materials for the assignment, such as background information and any handouts that will be used on the day. If you are using video or audio clips, provide these too.

Usually, you'll need to book a communication service for at least two hours. For assignments that are more than two hours long, you may need to book two communication professionals, who will take turns. Providing communication support requires real concentration, so all communication professionals will need a break roughly every 30 minutes.

## Action on Hearing Loss Communication Support

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

Telephone **0845 685 8000**

Textphone **0845 685 8001**

Fax **0845 685 8002**

SMS **0753 741 0086**

Email [communication.services@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:communication.services@hearingloss.org.uk)

**9 Bakewell Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6XU**

All of our communication professionals are registered with NRCPD or SASLI.

## How can I make sure I get a good service?

Always choose a registered professional – that way, you can be confident that they:

- have achieved the relevant qualifications, knowledge and skills
- work to recognised standards
- follow a formal code of conduct
- are subject to a complaints procedure
- have a Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS (formerly Criminal Records Bureau – CRB) disclosure
- are covered by professional indemnity insurance.

Registered communication professionals shouldn't tell anyone else what is said on an assignment – or offer opinions while working.

To check if a communication professional is registered, contact:

## NRCPD

Telephone **0191 383 1155**  
SMS **07974 121594**  
Email [enquiries@nrcpd.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nrcpd.org.uk)  
Website [nrcpd.org.uk](http://nrcpd.org.uk)

Sign language interpreters and deafblind interpreters in Scotland register with the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) or NRCPD, or both.

## SASLI

Telephone **0141 248 8159**  
Email [mail@sasli.org.uk](mailto:mail@sasli.org.uk)  
Website [sasli.org.uk](http://sasli.org.uk)



## Our Health in Your Hands

NRCPD and Action on Hearing Loss are part of the **Our Health in Your Hands** campaign, which helps people who are deaf or have hearing loss get the right communication support at hospital and GP appointments. You can ask to see the interpreter's NRCPD registration badge when you go for health appointments, to check they are qualified to the appropriate level to support you. Interpreters should be able to produce this badge at other appointments too. Visit the campaign's website to find out more: [ohyh.org.uk](http://ohyh.org.uk)

## Where can I get more information and support?

For more information about communication support services, see our **Communication** factsheets. You can find these on our website at [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/publications](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/publications) or order them from our Information Line (see [back page](#) for details).

You can also contact our free, confidential Information Line or visit [actiononhearingloss.org.uk](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk) for information about all aspects of living with deafness, hearing loss or tinnitus.

We have the latest information on hearing aids and cochlear implants, assistive technology and products, lipreading, your rights, and benefits you could claim. You can also find out about: services in your area, becoming a member and receiving our magazine, the latest research developments, and getting involved as a volunteer or supporter.

## Information you can trust

The Information Standard certifies us as producers of high-quality, evidence-based information.

### Did you find this information helpful?

Please tell us what you think of this leaflet – did you find it useful? Could we improve it? Please email [reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk). And if you'd like to join our Readers' Panel, to help us create and review information for our website and publications, please let us know.

# Products to help with hearing loss and tinnitus

We specialise in equipment to make your life easier, safer and more enjoyable. Call us or go online to find out about our wide range of products that will support you with every situation: at home, at work and on the move.

## Our products can help you to:

- hear the TV clearly without needing to turn it up to full volume
- join in with conversations, even in a noisy environment
- not miss friends or relatives at the door
- find the best way to wake up on time
- stay in touch with friends and family.

To request your **FREE PRODUCT CATALOGUE**, or to find out which products could help you, look online or contact our Customer Services Team:

Telephone **03330 144 525**

Textphone **03330 144 530**

Email [solutions@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:solutions@hearingloss.org.uk)

**5% OFF** your order!\* Use the code **Shop3**

Shop online at [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop)

\*Excluding postage and packaging and VAT.

**Action on Hearing Loss** (formerly RNID) is the largest UK charity helping people who are confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss.

We give support and care, develop technology and treatments, and campaign for equality. We rely on donations to continue our vital work.

To find out more, visit [actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

### Questions about deafness, tinnitus or hearing loss?

Contact our free, confidential Information Line:

Telephone 0808 808 0123

Textphone 0808 808 9000

SMS 0780 000 0360  
(standard text message rates apply)

Email [information@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:information@hearingloss.org.uk)

### Join us

 Action on Hearing Loss

 @ActionOnHearing



Published: **June 2018. Version 2.** Review date: **May 2020.**

**Action on Hearing Loss is the trading name of The Royal National Institute for Deaf People.**

A registered charity in England and Wales (207720) and Scotland (SC038926). A1458/0618