



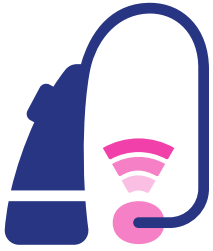
Communication tips

for **health and social care professionals**

COVID-19 poses unique challenges for communication as many of those with hearing loss rely on visual cues, such as lipreading and facial expression. This visual information is lost when someone is on a telephone or wearing a mask. Remote consultations on the telephone, or communicating with health and social care professionals wearing PPE, therefore, can be difficult or impossible for people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

The Equality Act requires reasonable adjustments to be made to support disabled people, including providing information in an accessible format. The Accessible Information Standard puts a legal requirement on all health and social care providers to identify communication needs and provide information in people's preferred format. Accessible standards must be upheld, even in these unprecedented times.

Below, we set out a number of simple tips that should be adopted by health and social care professionals:



Ask for and meet communication needs where possible

- Instead of using the telephone, where possible use video conferencing tools and add live captioning through video conferencing software.
- Utilise RelayUK for people with hearing loss.
- Check if the person using your service is wearing a hearing aid and that it's working, if not, contact audiology locally for advice or a personal listener to amplify sound.
- There are live speech-to-text apps available, though with varying levels of accuracy. If these are used, understanding must be checked.
- Utilise Video Relay Services, such as InterpreterNow, for British Sign Language users.



General communication tips

Where lipreading is possible:

- Make sure there is adequate lighting.
- Face the person.
- Get the person's attention before speaking.
- Use normal lip movements, facial expression and gestures.



The below are particularly important when the person using your service cannot use visual cues, for example when you're on the telephone or wearing PPE:

- **Speak clearly** – avoid shouting or speaking unnecessarily slowly.
- **Say things differently** if people ask you to repeat what you've said or do not understand.
- **Check understanding** by asking the person to repeat information back.
- **Use plain language** and be straight to the point.
- **Reduce background noise** as much as possible.
- Where possible, also **provide written information**.
- If requested, **speak to a relative or friend**.