



Independent Hearing Care Services

Hearability information sheet

INTERVIEWING AND EMPLOYING SOMEONE WHO IS DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Employment law and deaf and hard of hearing people

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995) it is unlawful for an employer to treat a disabled applicant or employee less favourably than other applicants or employees for reasons related to their disability.

In 1999 new rights under the (DDA) made an employer duty bound by law to make reasonable adjustments if a disabled job applicant or employee is at a substantial disadvantage to others.

The Act covers deaf people and those who have a substantial hearing loss. This includes people who have difficulty following speech (wearing a hearing aid or not) and those who cannot hear and understand another person talking over the telephone. These are mainly people with severe or profound hearing loss whose deafness or hearing loss can have an adverse effect on their daily life.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing are more likely than hearing people to be unemployed or in semi-skilled jobs. However, if the employer makes 'reasonable adjustments' in the workplace, and given the right training and support, there are very few jobs that deaf and hard of hearing people are unable to do.

It is always important for the employer to look at the skills, experience, capability and potential of the candidate for the job and not at their hearing loss.

Advertising

Employers' equal opportunities policies should encourage deaf and hard of hearing people to apply for jobs and to feel that they will have a fair interview.

Some deaf and hard of hearing people will be registered at their local job centre or employment service with the Disability Employment Adviser. They may be registered under the Access to Work (AtW) scheme that can provide support in the workplace.

Job adverts can reach deaf and hard of hearing people at Deaf clubs and hard of hearing clubs (Hearing Concern will have a list of these).

Many deaf and hard of hearing people read the publications of other deaf and hard of hearing organisations. The Internet is also a popular place to advertise for potential employees (deaf-uk-jobs@yahoogroups.com), as well as Read Hear on Ceefax (TV).

Guidance for employers and interviewers

Before the interview

- Ask the candidate whether they require a sign language interpreter to assist them with communication. There are 50,000 people in the UK who rely on British Sign Language. People with a hearing loss may need a lipspeaker, notetaker or speech-to-text transcript reporter to help them communicate in the interview. For information on how to book these contact the Disability Employment Adviser at your local job centre, or contact the CACDP www.cacdp.org.uk.
- Check with the candidate whether they need any technical aids such as an inductive loop system, infrared system, personal amplifier or personal radio system (these systems can be portable or installed).
- Make sure that the interview room is clear of electrical noise and echo. Neon lighting, computers, air conditioning and other electrical equipment can generate electrical noise. Electrical noise can interfere with hearing aids when they are used on the T-position for inductive loops etc.
- Check whether the reception staff and security have been made aware that the interviewee is deaf or hard of hearing and brief accordingly, maybe accompanying candidates to the interview room.

The interview

- If the candidate is hard of hearing they should be face to face with the interviewer, with the light on the interviewer's face. This will allow the candidate to see the interviewer's mouth movements clearly, which helps with lipreading. If they have a sign language interpreter, the candidate will be mainly concentrating on what the interpreter is signing to them.
- Look directly at the candidate and give them time to adjust to unfamiliar lip patterns.
- Remember to be patient if not understood at first, as some words are difficult to lipread. Rephrase instead of repeating. Remember to speak slowly and clearly. Speak up, but do not shout at the candidate.
- Take care not to place pens and paper etc. in front of your mouth as the candidate will have difficulty lipreading.
- If the interview includes assessment exercises, the use of technical aids (as mentioned earlier) will help the hard of hearing person to be on equal terms with hearing candidates.
- Ask the candidate what equipment or aids would help them to be able to do the job. People with residual hearing and who wear a hearing aid may need a telephone with extra amplification or one, which has an inductive coupler in the handset so they can hear sound by switching to the T position on their hearing aid.


Deaf or hard of hearing people who are unable to use a voice telephone may need a textphone (e.g. Minicom) to access the telephone network or 'Typetalk' – the telephone relay service. A textphone is like a telephone but it has a display screen and keyboard and it lets users type in their conversation. Typetalk is the national telephone relay service that enables deaf, deafblind, deafened, hard of hearing and speech-impaired people to communicate with hearing people anywhere in the world. Many businesses find that Typetalk provides an ideal boost to their staff and customers with communication needs.

It is most important for the interviewer to think about the candidate's ability to do the job and what skills and experience they have instead of focusing on their deafness or hearing loss. Remember that, with the right reasonable adjustments, training and support in the workplace, deaf and hard of hearing people are able to do most jobs.

Employment

- The Access to Work (AtW) scheme can help provide sign language interpreters, notetakers, lipspeakers or speech-to-text reporting for the employee's induction, training, meetings, courses or conferences. It can also provide technical aids or equipment to suit the particular needs of the employee such as telephones with amplification, hearing aids, loop systems, pagers etc. A portable loop system can be taken to conferences and external training.
- Email will assist the deaf or hard of hearing person to communicate with colleagues and people outside the organisation. Some people also like to use a fax machine.
- Other employees may find it useful to have deaf awareness training to help them communicate with the new deaf or hard of hearing employee.
- Examine building evacuation details; flashing or vibrating systems may be required in addition to alarm bells and sirens.
- Examine the proposed or changed working environment so that physical, mechanical, electrical and electronic noise can be assessed, reduced or limited.

Hearing Concern can give you advice on good communication tactics, technical aids and information about deaf awareness training. Contact the Help Desk on 0845 0744 600 or email: info@hearingconcern.org.uk.

Further information <i>Employers Forum on Disability</i> Nutmeg House 60 Gainsford St London SE1 2NY Tel. 0207 403 3020 Textphone 0207 403 3020 Fax 0207 0404 Email efd@employers-forum.co.uk	Mr A Goldsmith RHAD BA Health MSHAA RGN RMN PGCEA RNT Registered Under The Hearing Aid Council Act 1968 N° 5640 Hearability Ltd, 29 Broadwater Street West, Worthing, Registered N° 4625005  07990796210 / 01903 237732 Email: hearabilitys@btconnect.com
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