

## Providing Access to Communication in English for Deaf People

### Your rights to communication support under the DDA

The majority of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people in the United Kingdom have English as their first or preferred language. In order to be able to participate in situations such as doctors' appointments, education, courts and tribunals, you may need one or more forms of appropriate communication support.

However, are you aware that you are entitled to have communication support provided? Even when communication support is requested, service providers often either refuse to provide it or offer the wrong type of support.

#### Know your rights

Under the **Disability Discrimination Act**, service providers must make "reasonable adjustments" to the way in which they provide their services to make them accessible to disabled people. The key word here is "reasonable", as what is reasonable in a given situation depends on the size and nature of the service provider and the resources available to them. So the provision of a speech-to-text reporter or lipspeaker would be a reasonable adjustment for an appointment with a hospital consultant. A corner shop would not have to provide speech-to-text or a lipspeaker, but it would be reasonable for them to provide a pen and paper so that they can exchange notes with deaf customers.

Failure to make arrangements for appropriate communication support, if it is a reasonable adjustment and has been requested, would be likely to constitute discrimination under the DDA.

#### Your preferred communication support

It is not acceptable for a service provider to provide, for example, a sign language interpreter when a speech to text reporter has been requested (or vice versa). This would not be a reasonable adjustment, as the case study below shows.

#### Case study

Mr Appleby brought a claim for disability discrimination under the DDA against the Department for Work and Pensions. Despite a clear written request for speech-to-text communication support, the court provided sign language interpreters for the trial. The RNID Casework Service represented Mr Appleby and issued court proceedings on his behalf. The Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD), now the Department of Constitutional Affairs (DCA), subsequently admitted liability. As part of the settlement, the DCA agreed to take advice from the Disability Rights Commission when reviewing its procedures to ensure it is accessible to disabled people. The LCD also paid Mr Appleby £1,100 plus costs.

## Types of communication support

**Verbatim speech-to-text reporters** use a phonetic keyboard to provide a real-time transcript of the meeting on a computer monitor or projected onto a screen.

**Electronic note takers** type using a conventional keyboard. They produce a summary of what is being said, which the deaf person can read on the screen.

**Manual note takers** take notes in settings such as education and meetings for the deaf person to read at the time or later.

**Lipspeakers** silently reproduce the shape of words, rhythm and stress to make lipreading easier.

**Deafblind manual interpreters** spell words into a deafblind person's hand using the deafblind manual alphabet or the block alphabet.

**Cued Speech transliterators** use lip patterns together with eight handshapes in four positions near the mouth, to give a visual representation of spoken language, sound-for-sound.

## What to do if you are refused communication support

You may have found that service providers have refused to provide support or offer the wrong type of communication support – this leaflet tells you what your rights are. For further details about how to book Language Service Professionals or if you need any help in ensuring that you are provided with appropriate communication support please contact one of the organisations participating in the ACE campaign. A helpful booklet called: **Providing access to communication in English for deaf people - Your duties under the DDA - A guide for service providers, employers and trade organisations** is available from the ACE coalition.

This leaflet was produced by the  
**Access to  
Communication in  
English** coalition

The **Access to Communication in English** (ACE) campaign aims to ensure that all those who need spoken or written language based communication can easily find it. The ACE coalition is coordinated by **UK Council on Deafness** (UKCoD) and is made up of leading organisations that work with deaf people.

Full details of all organisations that support this campaign can be found at:

[www.deafcouncil.org.uk/memdir.htm](http://www.deafcouncil.org.uk/memdir.htm)

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