

Meeting Deafblind people

- Deafblind people are usually supported by a guide/communicator or interpreter
- Some may hear speech when there is no background noise, otherwise they will rely on touch
- An easy to learn fingerspelling system is sometimes used or large capital letters can be traced on the person's hand
- A deafblind person may speak to you, but may not hear your voice

Information

- A standard question should be included in all correspondence, on paper and in electronic format, asking what arrangements might be needed to enable participation
- For all correspondence and publications, use Arial or Verdana, with 12 pt as the minimum type size
- Check with deafblind individuals if they require Braille, large print and what font and point size they prefer
- A Sign Language Interpreter, Lipspeaker and/or Speech-to-text operator should be provided at all public events and at one-to-one meetings
- When speaking at a public meeting or event, do so at a normal pace and do not shout or walk about as you speak

How to book communication services

Contact SCoD's Offices or visit SCoD's website www.scod.org.uk/directory for addresses of local communication services units

The Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) is:

The Scottish umbrella body representing the interests of local and national voluntary organisations, local authority social work, education and health departments working with Deaf Sign Language users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people.

SCoD's aims are to:

- Enable deaf people to contribute in shaping the policies which affect their lives
- Work to challenge negative attitudes and to combat discriminatory practice
- Raise public awareness of issues affecting deaf people and their views and experience
- Campaign for equal opportunities for deaf people
- Improve the social inclusion of deaf people
- Support the recognition of British Sign Language
- Promote the rights of deaf people and encourage improved practice

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**Scottish Council
on Deafness**

*Your Deaf, Hard of Hearing and
Deafblind Constituents*

*.....the Lead
Organisation for
Deaf Issues
in Scotland*



Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD)

welcomes the Scottish Parliament's philosophy of being accessible, open and responsive to the Scottish population's needs. SCoD also supports the Parliament's aspirations to communicate efficiently and effectively and encourage participation in decision-making. You, as a Member of the Scottish Parliament will likely have deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind constituents. To ensure that you are aware of their issues of concern and also to encourage their contributions, this leaflet has been produced to give you guidance on how to meet different communication and information needs of Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind constituents.

Terminology - deafness

Deaf - people who consider themselves to be members of a group that shares a sign language and culture

deaf - includes all individuals who experience a hearing loss irrespective of degree, type or age of onset

Hard of hearing - individuals who experience a significant hearing loss and prefer to use speech and hearing aids as their mode of communication

Deafblind - individuals with a dual sensory impairment

British Sign Language (BSL) - a visual-gestural language with its own vocabulary, grammar and syntax, officially recognised by the UK Government as a language in its own right



General points of advice

- 👁️ Avoid making assumptions about deafness or using stereotypes
- 👁️ Ask deaf people how they prefer to communicate
- 👁️ Do not assume that a deaf constituent is only interested in deafness issues
- 👁️ Always ask deaf constituents where they would prefer to sit - they will want to see your face clearly, to assist in lipreading

Meetings & events - venues

- 👁️ Should be physically accessible with accessible toilets
- 👁️ Entry systems should have a visual indicator
- 👁️ Should have good and consistent levels of light and the means to control the level of natural light to minimise glare
- 👁️ Should be clearly signposted
- 👁️ Should be free from background noise
- 👁️ Should be fitted with an induction loop system which is connected to a microphone

Meeting all deaf people

If you do not have the services of a Sign Language Interpreter or your constituent finds it difficult to lipread you,

- 👁️ Be prepared to use paper and pen to communicate; remember to write clearly and use plain English
- 👁️ Relax and use eye contact
- 👁️ Avoid language and gestures more suitable for children
- 👁️ Don't shout
- 👁️ Be prepared to rephrase



Meeting Hard of Hearing People

Not everyone who is deaf or hard of hearing can lipread, it is best to ask the deaf person when you first meet. If s/he does lipread, remember that it requires intense concentration and is very tiring. You can help by speaking clearly at your normal pace. Also:

- 👁️ Look directly at the person and pronounce your words slightly slower and clearly
- 👁️ Use your facial expressions, gestures and body movements to emphasise and clarify your spoken words (only three out of ten words are visible on the lips)
- 👁️ Face the light and keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your face while speaking

Make sure that there is no extensive background noise that will make listening difficult for hearing aid users

Meeting Sign Language Users

- 👁️ Remember to speak to the Deaf person rather than to the Sign Language Interpreter. It may be necessary, depending on the length of the meeting, to have more than one Sign Language Interpreter
- 👁️ If necessary, attract the Deaf person with a light touch on his/her shoulder or wave of your hand
- 👁️ Avoid a conversation with a Sign Language Interpreter which excludes the Deaf person from contributing
- 👁️ Only one person should speak at a time