

MPS



don't leave me out!

being accessible to deaf people

The Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) recognises that MPs have responsibilities to their constituents, the Westminster parliament and their political party and that they will try to assist their constituents with a wide range of problems. One of the challenges many MPs face is not being able to communicate effectively with the deaf people who live in the communities that they represent.

Deaf people have the same right to access their MPs as their hearing peers. In order that deaf people can participate fully in the democratic process and local decision making, MPs need to be able to provide information in appropriate formats and to provide appropriate professional, registered communication support for one-to-one meetings, surgeries, consultation events and committee meetings.

One in five of the population has a hearing loss; this means that there are over one million people in Scotland who have a range of hearing loss, from the profoundly deaf to those who are hard of hearing. They have different communication needs. British Sign Language (BSL) is the first or preferred language of approximately 6000 deaf people in Scotland.

SCoD has produced the following guidance to help you represent the views of the deaf constituents in your area.

key tips

Before meeting with a deaf person on an individual basis, find out if they need communication support and if so, what type. That way you will be able to book the appropriate communication support for the meeting.

When arranging public meetings or surgeries, provide communication services, such as BSL/English interpreters, lipspeakers and electronic notetakers. Meeting rooms must be well lit and equipped with working loop systems. Wall decor should be plain, keeping background visual noise to a minimum.

When providing information, make it available in a variety of accessible formats such as: BSL with subtitles, braille, Moon, large print, easy read and plain English. A clear font such as Arial, point size 12, should be used for print work.

Ensure the accessibility of the information on your web site by following the W3C accessibility guidelines. Include BSL clips where possible.

In addition to a telephone number, your contact details should include a textphone number, a fax number and an email address. Many deaf people communicate via SMS so providing a mobile number would also show that you are deaf aware.

For more information about access for deaf people, contact your local deaf organisation.