



Supporting employees with hearing loss

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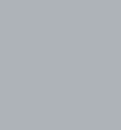
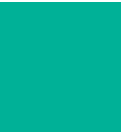
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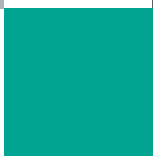
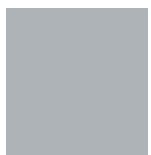
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Making adjustments – top tips





Introduction



This guide aims to give a general introduction to how hearing loss might impact someone at work and provide good practice tips on how to support them.

Diagnosis, treatment and cultural perceptions of hearing loss will vary between countries. Similarly, legal requirements will also differ: in some countries, hearing loss may not be legally recognised as a disability whereas in other countries, people with hearing loss may be protected from discrimination by legislation based on the degree of loss.

Ensuring that you support all candidates and employees with hearing loss will help you create a more diverse workforce. It's often the case that when a line manager is confident managing a person with a disability or long-term condition, they become more effective managers for all employees.

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Language

Language can be important in creating an open and inclusive workplace for people with hearing loss. In this guide, we refer to 'people with hearing loss' to cover people with anything from mild hearing loss to profound deafness.

There are a range of other terms that people may use to describe themselves or their condition including Deaf or deaf (the capitalised D emphasises belonging to the Deaf community), deafened, hearing impaired or hard of hearing. If in doubt, use the language that the individual uses to describe themselves and avoid placing 'labels' on employees.

Talking about disability

In this guide, we use the term 'disabilities' as used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) [1] which has been ratified by over 175 countries. The UN CRPD Article 1 provides a definition for 'persons with disabilities':

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

In practice, this could include people with a wide range of impairments or conditions such as dyslexia, cancer, diabetes and hearing loss, to name just a few.

[1] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: [un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)

Talking about adjustments

Adjustments (in some countries referred to as 'accommodations') remove or reduce the effect of the barriers experienced by candidates and employees with disabilities.

Examples of adjustments might include providing a ramp as an alternative to stairs or an electronic version of paper document so that an employee with a visual impairment can use screen reader software to access the information. Working hours and locations can be made flexible, and managers can agree different ways to communicate with their employees e.g. over the phone, via email, face-to-face or in writing.

These are small changes that can remove barriers that stop someone from doing their job and can support good performance. In this guide, we refer to these types of changes as 'adjustments.'

Working hours and locations can be made flexible.



What is hearing loss?

Hearing loss occurs when sound does not reach the brain.

There are different types of hearing loss depending on where the damage is located. It can be a 'sensorineural hearing loss' when it affects the inner ear, a 'conductive hearing loss' when it affects the outer ear to the middle ear or 'mixed loss' when it affects both areas.

It is important to ask the person with hearing loss what their language/communication support needs are, as there are ways of minimising communication barriers and improving communications generally.

What is deafblindness?

Deafblindness is sometimes called dual sensory impairment.

This is because 'deafblind' people will have both some hearing loss and some sight loss. People who refer to themselves as deafblind are usually people who are born deaf and use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred language and who lose their sight as they get older, for example, if they have Usher's Syndrome. Some people who are born with deafblindness may also have physical and/or learning disabilities. Many deafblind people may not be totally deaf and totally blind.

It is therefore important to ask deafblind people what their preferred communication methods are.

What is a cochlear implant?

A cochlear implant is a surgically implanted electronic medical device that can provide sound signals to the brain.

The cochlear implant does not remove the person's hearing loss but it can provide a useful sensation of hearing sound. Not all people with hearing loss can benefit from the use of a cochlear implant. Cochlear implants are more readily available in high income countries.

About tinnitus

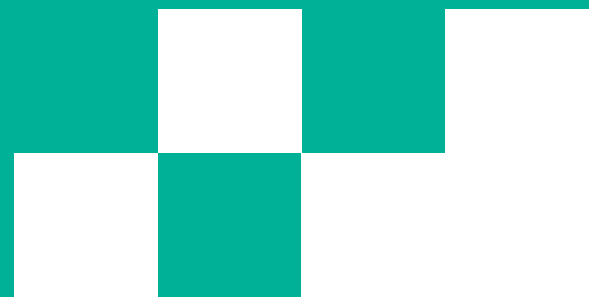
Tinnitus is the perception of noises in the person's head and/or ear which have no external source. Those living with the condition may have to endure a ringing, buzzing, hissing, whistling or other noise.

The sensation can be constant or intermittent and it can vary in volume. The noise may be in one or both ears, or it may feel like it is inside the person's head.

Tinnitus is more common in people who have a hearing loss but those with full hearing can have tinnitus too. Deaf and deafblind sign language users can have tinnitus without ever hearing sounds.

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11 to 38 are available in the
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Contact us

**Business Disability Forum
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London
SE1 2NY**

Tel: +44-(0)20-7403-3020

Fax: +44-(0)20-7403-0404

Email: enquiries@businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

Web: businessdisabilityforum.org.uk

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