

Communicating with hard of hearing staff and patients whilst wearing a mask



Top tips, techniques and technology

All members of NHS staff working in hospitals or clinical settings in England are required to wear masks. This may make communication difficult in some situations and will present significant challenges to staff and patients with hearing loss.

Please remember that mouth movement, lip patterns, facial expressions and body language are key components of communication.

Speaking slightly louder may help in some situations, but is more likely to further distort what you are saying.



Portable induction loops are available for hearing aid users (contact esh-tr.accessibleinformation@nhs.net).

People with and without hearing loss often feel uncomfortable asking others to repeat information especially when in larger meetings. Remember to introduce yourself – it's easy to mistake someone behind a mask. Instead of asking lots of questions:

- Record meetings
- Use portable induction loops if any team members wear hearing aids
- Facilitators could provide key points to be discussed in advance
- Attendees should write down anything they needs to raise/discuss
- Use a flip chart/white board to capture key points during the meeting
- Distribute notes/minutes/follow ups/actions etc. as soon as possible (even if it is not a formal meeting)
- Provide opportunities for a 1:1 follow up/Q&A (email, video, face to face, telephone etc.)

Communication tips when working with Hearing & Hard of Hearing patients:

- Pre-record standard explanations/procedures onto an iPad e.g. a member of the pathology team could film themselves explaining the procedure for a blood

test, consent etc. this can then be shown to a patient who may struggle to understand speech through a mask (**see tips for filming below**)

- Write things down – use a small whiteboard
- Have information leaflets handy and print out some key points (picture diagrams are very helpful & informative)
- Use props and demonstrations
- A small number of approved clear facemasks will soon be available via PPE ordering

Communication tips when working with Severely d/Deaf Patients

- Check whether a BSL interpreter is required before the appointment where possible
- Use an iPad with the LanguageLine app to access an interpreter via video link or
- Request the 'Interpreter on Wheels' (Contact esh-tr.accessibleinformation@nhs.net)
- If the patient does not use BSL –
 - identify how best to communicate
 - this maybe with the help of a family member/carer
 - use a small white board to write things down
 - take notes to give to the patient
 - follow up with a letter
 - Contact esh-tr.accessibleinformation@nhs.net for further support

Tips for filming

- Practice what you will record
- Write down the key points to use as cues
- Ensure the background is clear (no posters, notices or lights are behind you)
- Position the camera/phone/iPad to a level to capture your waist and head
- Have any props to hand
- Look at the camera when speaking (don't read from a script)
- Use natural body language and tone of voice
- Speak clearly and do not obstruct your face with your hands (unless this is part of a procedure you are demonstrating)
- Check your filming to ensure that the video and audio is clear