FREE PRINTABLE PDF | UK WORKPLACES

Deaf-Friendly Workplace Toolkit

Practical checklists and templates for inclusive communication, accessible meetings and individual workplace adjustments.



WHAT IS INSIDE

20-point audit

Check everyday barriers

Adjustment templates

Plan and review support

Meeting checklist

Make meetings accessible

For managers, HR teams and colleagues in UK workplaces

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Start with the person, not an assumption

Use this pack to make helpful changes with Deaf and hard-of-hearing colleagues - and to check whether those changes work.

1 Ask

Start by asking how the person prefers to communicate. Preferences differ and may change.

2 Identify

Notice barriers in meetings, instructions, interviews, alarms and everyday teamwork.

3 Agree

Discuss practical options, clarify responsibilities and agree a useful starting point.

4 Review

Check whether support works and adjust it when jobs, settings or needs change.

A useful distinction

Deaf awareness is about practical inclusion. British Sign Language (BSL) can be important when a colleague uses it, but not all Deaf or hard-of-hearing people use BSL. Ask rather than assuming.

WHAT THIS PACK IS - AND IS NOT

Use these printable pages as prompts and recording tools. They are not a disability assessment, legal determination, or substitute for specialist advice. Keep employee information private and follow your organisation's policy.

QUICK PRACTICE GUIDE

Seven communication habits that help

Small, everyday changes can make conversations more accessible. Always follow the colleague's expressed preferences.

- [ ] **Ask first:** “What is the best way for us to communicate?”
- [ ] **Get attention:** use a wave or another agreed visual cue before speaking.
- [ ] **Face the person:** keep your face visible and speak at a natural pace.
- [ ] **Reduce noise:** choose a quieter space where helpful and practical.
- [ ] **Take turns:** avoid overlapping speech in group conversations.
- [ ] **Write key points:** share actions, dates and decisions in an accessible format.
- [ ] **Rephrase calmly:** if something is unclear, try a different explanation.



TRY THIS PHRASE

“Would written notes, captions, an interpreter or another approach be most useful for this conversation?”

QUICK PRACTICE GUIDE

Make meetings easier to follow

A useful meeting plan covers access before, during and after the conversation.

1

BEFORE

Ask attendees about preferred support; share agenda and materials; arrange interpreting, live captions or notetaking where agreed; test equipment and seating.

2

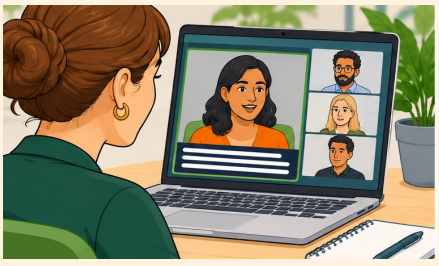
DURING

Use clear turn-taking; keep faces well lit and visible; reduce background noise; check that support is working; allow time for clarification.

3

AFTER

Share written decisions and action points; provide an accessible summary or transcript where appropriate; ask what should improve next time.



REMEMBER

Automatic captions can contain errors. They may help, but they are not always a replacement for a person's agreed communication support.

MANAGER CHECKPOINTS

Look beyond conversations

Inclusive workplace design also covers recruitment, induction, the physical environment and safety information.

Recruitment and induction

Offer accessible interview arrangements; ask what format will work; provide key induction details in accessible form.

Environment and equipment

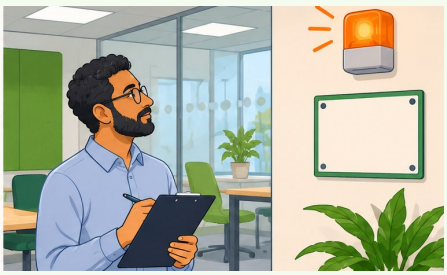
Check noise, lighting, seating and video-call arrangements; consider suitable assistive technology when needed.

Announcements and safety

Make important notices, changes and emergency alerts accessible; confirm safety arrangements through the appropriate workplace process.

Ongoing opportunity

Review accessibility in training, appraisals, promotions and changes to roles - not only at induction.



DISCUSS INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

These are prompts, not a uniform adjustment list. Document and review support with the person concerned; do not assume every colleague needs the same tools.

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET | 1 OF 2

Deaf-friendly workplace checklist

Tick each item when it is in place. Mark actions needed and decide who will follow them up.

COMMUNICATION AND TEAM HABITS

- [ ] **01.** We ask about individual communication preferences. Action ____
- [ ] **02.** We get attention before speaking where needed. Action ____
- [ ] **03.** We avoid shouting and keep faces visible when helpful. Action ____
- [ ] **04.** We use quieter spaces where practical. Action ____
- [ ] **05.** Important decisions and changes are available in writing. Action ____
- [ ] **06.** Meeting access needs are checked in advance. Action ____
- [ ] **07.** Agendas and key materials are shared ahead of meetings. Action ____
- [ ] **08.** People take turns rather than talking over each other. Action ____
- [ ] **09.** Agreed captions, interpreting or other support is arranged. Action ____
- [ ] **10.** Written actions are shared after important meetings. Action ____

MOST IMPORTANT ACTION FROM THIS PAGE

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET | 2 OF 2

Continue your workplace audit

Think about systems and opportunities as well as day-to-day communication.

RECRUITMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

- [ ] **11.** Recruitment contact details invite adjustment requests. Action ____
- [ ] **12.** Interviews can be arranged in an accessible format. Action ____
- [ ] **13.** Induction information is supplied accessibly. Action ____
- [ ] **14.** Training and development opportunities are accessible. Action ____
- [ ] **15.** We review communication needs when roles change. Action ____
- [ ] **16.** Workspaces consider lighting and avoidable noise. Action ____
- [ ] **17.** Important announcements have accessible alternatives. Action ____
- [ ] **18.** Emergency alert arrangements are checked individually. Action ____
- [ ] **19.** Managers know how to discuss and review adjustments. Action ____
- [ ] **20.** Staff can raise accessibility barriers without stigma. Action ____

AGREED NEXT STEP / PERSON RESPONSIBLE

PRINTABLE TEMPLATE | PRIVATE RECORD

Reasonable adjustments discussion

Use this page to guide a private conversation about barriers, possible support and an appropriate review.

Before the conversation

Ask what communication format will help the person participate. Explain how the record will be stored and who, if anyone, will have access.

Date of discussion

Attendees / roles (if appropriate)

What work activity or communication barrier is occurring?

What support would the employee like to consider?

What options have been discussed together?

Which practical next step is agreed?

Keep this record secure. Avoid collecting unnecessary medical details.

PRINTABLE TEMPLATE

Adjustment action and review plan

Use a separate row for each agreed change. Keep the plan with the appropriate confidential workplace records.

Employee / reference (use local secure process): _____

Agreed change / support	Owner	Start by	Review date

CHECK AT THE REVIEW

- [ ] Has the change reduced the barrier?
- [ ] Does the employee want anything changed?
- [ ] Who is responsible for the next review?

Notes / decisions:

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Accessible meetings: print-and-use checklist

Keep a copy with the meeting organiser so access arrangements are planned rather than added at the last moment.

BEFORE THE MEETING

- [ ] Ask attendees privately whether communication support is needed.
- [ ] Send the agenda and reading materials in advance.
- [ ] Arrange agreed interpreting, captioning or notetaking.
- [ ] Check technology, lighting, seating and noise levels.

DURING THE MEETING

- [ ] Speak one at a time and make the current speaker clear.
- [ ] Keep speakers visible and avoid obscured faces.
- [ ] Confirm captions or other support are functioning.
- [ ] Provide pauses and space for questions or clarification.

AFTER THE MEETING

- [ ] Share written decisions, owners and deadlines.
- [ ] Provide the agreed accessible notes or transcript.
- [ ] Ask what would improve access next time.

Meeting / date: _____

Follow-up action: _____

PRINTABLE PERSONAL CARD

My communication preferences

An optional card a colleague can complete and share on their own terms. It belongs to the individual, not the workplace.

Respect privacy and choice

Do not require employees to disclose a diagnosis or use a particular communication method. Share this card only with permission.

Name / preferred form of address (optional):

How I prefer to communicate (tick any that apply):

- ☐ Face-to-face speech
- ☐ Written messages
- ☐ BSL / interpreter
- ☐ Captions / speech-to-text
- ☐ Assistive listening equipment
- ☐ Another method

What helps me in meetings or one-to-one conversations:

Anything I would prefer colleagues to avoid:

This is a conversation aid - it does not replace an agreed workplace adjustment plan.

OPTIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITY

Three situations to discuss as a team

Use these cases for a short staff conversation. Ask what would make communication accessible for the person involved.

SCENARIO 01

A fast-moving team meeting

Several people speak at once. A Deaf colleague misses some of the decisions.

PRACTICAL RESPONSE

Agree turn-taking, suitable communication support and written decisions.

SCENARIO 02

An inaccessible first-day induction

A new starter receives detailed instructions only as spoken information.

PRACTICAL RESPONSE

Ask about preferences and provide accessible induction material and support.

SCENARIO 03

A noisy care setting

A colleague cannot follow an important instruction in a noisy corridor.

PRACTICAL RESPONSE

Move to a suitable quieter space where possible and use an agreed method.

TEAM NOTES / BETTER IDEAS

PRINTABLE ACTION PLAN

Your 30-day workplace improvement plan

Choose realistic actions, give each one an owner and review whether they help.

WEEK 1

Listen and identify

Ask about communication barriers; review the 20-point checklist.

Action / owner: _____

WEEK 2

Make simple improvements

Update meeting habits, written information and room arrangements.

Action / owner: _____

WEEK 3

Address individual needs

Discuss and implement agreed support or adjustments.

Action / owner: _____

WEEK 4

Check what has changed

Ask for feedback, review outcomes and plan further actions.

Action / owner: _____

Review together: did these changes improve access for the people involved?

RELIABLE UK SOURCES

Useful guidance and next steps

Use these authoritative sources for details that go beyond the scope of this printable toolkit.

RNID - Communication tips

Practical guidance for communicating respectfully with Deaf people and people with hearing loss.

Open official guidance >

RNID - Accessible meetings

Advice on preparing and delivering meetings that are more inclusive.

Open official guidance >

Acas - Reasonable adjustments at work

Legal duties and practical guidance for employers in England, Scotland and Wales.

Open official guidance >

GOV.UK - Access to Work for employers

Support that may help with additional costs; it does not replace reasonable-adjustment duties.

Open official guidance >

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Guidance on disability discrimination and employers' adjustment duties in Northern Ireland.

Open official guidance >

Want to learn basic BSL?

Alpha Academy's British Sign Language (BSL) Certificate: Level 1 & 2 introduces fingerspelling, everyday vocabulary and basic communication.

View BSL Level 1 & 2 course >

Prepared for general information and practical planning. It is not legal advice or a substitute for individual assessment. **Last reviewed: November 2026.**