



Coronavirus pandemic and deafened and hard of hearing people

The current coronavirus (**COVID- 19**) outbreak is an unprecedented situation and a major concern for healthcare authorities and citizens alike. Responses to this outbreak must be inclusive of all members of the public, persons with disabilities and include people who are deaf or hard of hearing. As the UK is preparing to deal with this unprecedented emergency, we must not forget persons with disabilities and vulnerable citizens in their need to access information, which is a fundamental right of every citizen. We must take steps now, to ensure deaf and hard of hearing people's access needs are met in the government's response to this threat.

Persons whose main language is English and are deaf or hard of hearing use lip reading and/or assistive listening technologies. They rely on subtitling and [speech to text reporting](#).

We have provided suggestions below to make everyone's efforts more inclusive in this difficult time.

Accessing the NHS 111 helpline:

- To ensure there are no barriers to contact the Coronavirus helpline, a SMS alternative must be available to those who are not confident using smartphones, or with the current telephone relay service (Relay UK).
- The NHS 111 helpline should provide alternatives such as SMS text services.

The NADP provides information and support for deafened people, who have lost all or most of their useful hearing, to help enable them to regain their independence and enjoy the best quality of life. NADP is run by and for deafened people. Registered Charity 294922 www.nadp.org.uk



National Association of Deafened People

Public announcements on TV and social media.

- Ensure all public announcements and videos shared on TV channels and social media are subtitled/ captioned accurately and synchronised with speech.

In Healthcare such as hospitals and GP practices:

- Where available, appropriate alternatives for optimum access should be used, such as healthcare professionals wearing a transparent surgical mask or face screen, so lip movement is still visible. This adjustment is essential for those who lipread.
- Where transparent masks are not available, all key points relayed to the deaf patient need to be written down, even if they appear to have understood what has been said.
- For longer consultations remote captioning, which is a speech to text service provided remotely, is a very good alternative.
- For telephone consultations, check with your patients if they use Relay UK and have alternatives ready such as Skype video calling which also creates a chat option, or ensure SMS text messaging is available. To make text relay calls please add 18002 prefix to your patients telephone number see <https://www.relayuk.bt.com/>

Employment

Remote working presents challenges for people with hearing loss. These requests may pose a challenge to deaf or hard of hearing people who find themselves needing to request remote captioning to be able to perform their daily work duties.

- Employers should be encouraged to facilitate this support from day one. Speech to Text Reporters can be found here <https://avstr.org.uk/>.
- Many communication support agencies will have a list of professionals working remotely

Some people with hearing loss may not have applied for ATW before. Even if they have, they may not have used as speech to text reporter support or remote captions when managing their day to day work. This situation will have changed for many who are now working from home and asked to take part in teleconferences or similar.

- Access to Work (ATW) is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>
- Access to Work (ATW) should recognise those sudden changes and set up a rapid response team with a dedicated access point online tasked with processing urgent requests for access to work and extensions to existing support. This should concentrate on remote captioning, to ensure deafened and people with a hearing loss are able to continue to work from home seamlessly, like their peers

If you need additional information please contact us on enquiries@nadp.org.uk

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