
Checklist

SCOTTISH
MUSEUMS
COUNCIL

Improving access for visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing



Parts of this checklist should help you to improve access for staff who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as visitors.

Providing information and promotional material

- Have you got a textphone installed, to provide information about your site and programmes? (This is the most helpful and straightforward type of phone setup for the deaf and hard of hearing – RNID and BT offer ‘Typetalk’. Relay systems are more complicated for your visitor and you.)
- Can visitors contact you by fax if necessary?
- Is your website and other written publicity clear and informative? (These may well be the main routes through which some visitors get their information.)
- If you advertise on local TV, have you remembered to include subtitles or other written information?
- Do you provide clear guidelines about the location of your museum or gallery and transport links? (It may be difficult for some visitors to ask for, obtain or understand directions.)
- If you have facilities for the deaf or hard of hearing, do you mention these in your promotional material?

Increasing access to the building or site

- Have you got parking facilities for disabled visitors? If you do not have your own car park, what alternatives can you suggest?

- Is there someone at reception trained to look out for visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing? It can be difficult to tell, as hearing aids are small and there are not always other obvious signs. It is good practice for staff to:
 - always speak clearly and not too fast
 - ask if the visitor has any particular access needs
 - learn some basic sign language (British Sign Language or BSL is most widely used in Britain)
 - have a pen and paper handy if all else fails.
- If you have a reception desk, does it have a glass partition? The glare on glass can make it difficult for lipreaders to understand what is being said to them. (You can install non-reflective glass if you feel the need to have a partition).
- Do you have a hearing loop or infrared system at reception? Is this made clear with a logo? (These systems can help visitors with some level of hearing and a hearing aid or receiver.)
- Do you have a well lit, quiet, alternative space where a member of staff can communicate with visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing? The advantages are that:
 - lipreaders can see the speaker's face and hands clearly
 - there is less external interference with hearing aids (these magnify all sound).
- Are your lighting levels adequate in the rest of the building? (Although some of your collections may require low lighting, there is no reason why the rest of the building should be dimly lit.)
- If you charge, do you allow free admission to a person assisting someone who is deaf or hard of hearing (eg an interpreter)?
- Is your layout and signage clear (avoiding the need for directions)?

Increasing access to exhibitions and collections

- Do you offer guided tours designed for visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing? (For example using a sign language interpreter or transcript of the tour guide's words.)

- Do you offer subtitles, induction loop or infrared systems to clarify any audio elements of your interpretation scheme? (Be careful of magnetic interference from electrical equipment such as cables, lights, etc.)
- Do you consult your visitors about improvements to new and existing displays or other aspects of the museum or gallery? (You could also consult local disabled groups.)

Policies

- Have people who are deaf or hard of hearing been considered as part of your access policy?
- Do you have a fire evacuation policy which includes disabled people as well as the able bodied? Some of your visitors may be unable to hear a fire alarm or public address system. (Your fire officer and local disabled groups can offer advice on this.)

Recommended reading and contacts

It is only possible to give general pointers within this checklist. For more detailed information see Resources: Access and the DDA and Contacts: Access and the DDA on the SMC website.

Highly recommended: RNID website at www.rnid.org.uk - this has numerous factsheets which can be downloaded, including information for people managing public venues.

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