

Tips for helping Churches to be Deaf aware

1 in 6 people has a hearing loss. This figure increases to 1 in 3 people over the age of 60. This means it's very likely that someone in your congregation will be deaf or hard of hearing. Ask them what would be helpful to enable them to have access to Church life. Here are a few tips to get you started

1. If you have a sound system, test it frequently to make sure it is working.
2. Make sure service leaders and preachers are trained to use a microphone properly
3. If you have a Loop System fitted, check it is switched on and working. If you don't have one – why not? Make sure there are notices to tell people there is a Loop system fitted.
4. Consider where readings and prayers are led from. Sometimes, people lead prayers from the back of church. This is very unhelpful for people who need to lipread.
5. Think about the lighting. Is there a window behind the leader or preacher? That can make it difficult to see to see a person's face, so hard to lip read.
6. Ask whether anyone needs extra support such as written notes of the sermon. If so, make sure these are provided before the service starts.
7. Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) may need a BSL/English Interpreter. (See the information sheet on this page: working with interpreters)
8. Don't leave Deaf or hard of hearing people out of any social interaction. Learn some basic communication skills – see below

Communication skills

Everybody can lip read but Deaf people often rely on it for normal conversation. Here are some of the rules of communication to help people who are trying to lip read:

1. Face the Deaf person and make eye contact
2. Speak clearly but don't over emphasise words
3. Speak at a reasonable pace – don't slow down too much or the normal rhythm of speech will be disrupted
4. Don't put anything in front of your face (check that beards are trimmed!)
5. Don't keep repeating the same phrase over and over if the Deaf person hasn't understood it. Think of another way of saying what you are trying to communicate
6. Don't shout! It's pointless!
7. Don't stand with your back to a window or a light.
8. Use some gestures – or learn BSL.