

# Is Your Counselling Service Accessible?



## A Guide

Prepared by the Scottish  
Council on Deafness



Representing the interests of Deaf Sign Language  
users, Deafblind, Deafened and Hard of Hearing  
people throughout Scotland for over 70 years

# Information



Information materials (e.g. leaflets, website) should be accessible and available in alternative formats, e.g.

- Plain English with graphics
- BSL video/CD ROM/DVD with subtitles
- Large Print\*
- Braille
- Moon

\*use a sans serif font such as Verdana or Arial, point size 12

If you have a website, consider an access audit of the site to ensure deaf and other disabled people can use it. The Scottish Accessible Information Forum produced a *Making Websites Accessible* supplement. Request a copy from:

SAIF  
Royal Exchange House  
100 Queen Street  
Glasgow G1 3DN  
Tel: 0141 226 5261



# Contacts



- You should ensure that deaf and deafblind clients are able to contact you by telephone, fax, SMS or e-mail to enquire about your service or make an appointment
- Many deaf and deafblind people use fax or mobile phone (SMS) instead of a telephone or textphone. Their messages should be treated in the same way as voice telephone calls and answered promptly
- Deaf and deafblind people are also make greater use of email. It is important to give equal prominence to email addresses, text/telephone, fax and videophone numbers on letterheading and publications
- Entry to your premises should be free from barriers - for example, where there is a door entry system, ensure a visual indicator can alert deaf clients when the door is open



## If you have a reception

- A reception counter should not be close to the entrance. Outside background noise can be a nuisance when the door is opened
- Try to keep the counter away from the waiting area so that the sound of conversation is not a problem
- The reception counter should be well lit with a plain background. Any windows in the background should be screened
- Install an induction loop for hearing aid users. Counter loops and portable loops are readily available.
- Train your reception staff in the use of the loop: what it is, how it works and how to switch it on and off.
- Where a loop is fitted, indicate this by displaying the loop sign that came with your equipment
- Reception staff should be given Deaf Awareness, Deafblind Awareness and Communication Skills training
- Staff should keep a pen and paper ready for writing things down
- Noise behind the reception counter should be kept to a minimum. Try separating office staff from reception colleagues with the use of a screen
- To assist communication with your deaf clients, use non-reflective glass in screens which separate staff from visitors



## Face-to-face contact with your client

- You and your staff should be trained in Deaf and Deafblind Awareness
- You should find out from your deaf or deafblind client what communication needs they have and which communication service is required
- The appropriate communication service (eg Sign Language or Deafblind Interpreter, Lipspeaker) should be booked well in advance of your counselling session
- You should be responsible for the payment of communication services



## For your counselling room

- Set up a room where you are not sitting with your back to a window, bright lights or a distracting background
- Use curtains and carpets to help deaden sound
- Make sure the rooms are well lit and the light switches are controllable (e.g. dimmer control switch)
- Try to avoid visual noise (i.e. walls and curtains should be plain and not heavily patterned)
- Install a loop system or purchase a portable loop system
- For group meetings, a portable loop or radio microphone may be useful

## If you have a lift in your premises

- Call buttons should light up to show lifts are working
- A visual display should show which floor the lift is on
- Emergency alarm buttons should light up
- Consider installing an emergency textphone in addition to an emergency phone or intercom in the lift
- Ensure the emergency button has a visual indicator

## Fire/emergency alarms

- All alarms should have a visual signal. Deaf clients should be issued with a vibrating pager for the duration of their visit
- Flashing beacon alarms should be fitted in toilets, changing rooms and other areas where deaf or deafblind clients might be alone
- Have an effective evacuation procedure to ensure that all areas are checked



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SCoD is the national co-ordinating body for voluntary and statutory organisations which cater for a wide range of needs of Deaf Sign Language users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people, their families, carers and professionals working with them. We all work together to improve the quality of life of all deaf people in Scotland.

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