



PROTOCOL

Meetings, Conferences & Events

Must-Dos for you & others

This booklet will help you to feel more confident about what is expected of you and others so that access and inclusion can flourish.

The Hearing Access Protocol is designed to make meetings, conferences and events more accessible, equitable and productive.

It addresses commonplace issues experienced by people with hearing loss and improves things for other groups of people too, including those with good hearing. By doing so, it enables inclusion to flourish.



Providing a foundation for an architecture of inclusivity

Speaking to be heard and understood

Managing noise levels

Managing acoustics, echo, reverberation

Awareness that needs differ

Providing & using PA systems, loop systems and microphones where/when appropriate

Adding captions/subtitles to audio-visual materials

Writing down names, dates & other important detail (as well as conveying verbally)

Providing agendas & hand-outs to make following & remembering easier

Ensuring size of font/text is suitably legible

Awareness of support professionals, assistive equipment, assistance dogs

Pauses & recapping periodically during presentations/talks

Meetings, conferences & events should be **accessible to everyone**, whatever their hearing ability

This booklet is a summary of the Hearing Access Protocol, which sets out how meetings and events should be run as the norm in order to accommodate the hearing and communication needs of people with hearing loss in an effective way.

One sixth of the population has some form of hearing loss, including the majority of people aged over 60. Additional numbers have related conditions such as sound sensitivity and tinnitus. This is why the good practices set out in the Hearing Access Protocol are so important.

You will find lots of great information, advice and check lists in the full document at: ideasforears.org.uk/hearing-access-protocol

Responsibility is shared

Everyone has a role to play in helping hearing access to be achieved. This booklet provides a summary of those responsibilities. It sets out the most essential actions for each party, as follows:

5 Must-Dos for everyone

5 Must-Dos for people with hearing loss

5 Must-Dos for speakers & presenters

5 Must-Dos for organisers



This is a Summary only
Read the full document at:
[www.ideasforears.org.uk/
hearing-access-protocol](https://www.ideasforears.org.uk/hearing-access-protocol)

The 5 Must-Dos

for everyone in the room

1

Speak so you can be heard and understood

Do your best to speak with sufficient clarity and volume. Keep your face visible, if possible, so listeners can use lip shape and facial expression to help them follow what is said.

Speak one at a time and avoid talking over each other. It can be difficult for listeners to decipher what is being said if there is more than one voice.

Avoid speaking quickly, especially if speaking with an accent that others may find hard to understand. If speaking for an extended period, check from time-to-time with your listeners how you are doing and provide recaps to assist those who may have lost the thread of what is being said.

2

Make use of the equipment

Write down important points, including names and dates. Use a flipchart, slides, handouts and other resources to share information in writing as well as verbally. This reduces mistakes caused by mishearing and helps listeners to have confidence they have picked things up correctly.

Use the microphone if it has been made available. Check with the organiser on how best to hold/place the microphone because models vary.



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www.ideasforears.org.uk/hearing-access-protocol



3

Think about the venue you are in

Background noise and poor acoustics create challenges. Even slight noise or echo can make listening much more difficult. It can also cause considerable discomfort to some. Be extra considerate of the hearing needs of others when in such a venue.

Be aware of the lighting. Glare or gloom can cause difficulties for people who use lipreading to assist them in following what is being said. Lower blinds if that helps and switch lights on after slide presentations.

5

Offer feedback

Let the organiser know how easily you could hear and follow the meeting/event proceedings. Do this in a collaborative rather than critical spirit. Seek to highlight the things that have worked well, as well as things that have proved challenging.

4

Respect the dignity of others

Not everyone wishes to highlight the difficulties they experience. If you are unaware that people with hearing loss are in the room, it could be because they have chosen not to disclose their hearing status. One in six people have hearing loss so it is a common issue.

Be helpful but avoid assuming what support someone may require as needs vary greatly.

If an attendee has a communication professional to assist them (e.g. an electronic notetaker or a sign language interpreter), direct your conversation to the attendee not the support worker.

Be willing to make small adjustments that will have little or no impact on you in order to accommodate the particular communication or language requirements of others.

Learn more

Workshops & webinars are available to help you learn more about accessible meetings, conferences & events.

Find out more:
info@ideasforears.org.uk

The 5 Must-Dos

for people with hearing loss

1

Give yourself the best chance possible

Identify the things that are within your own control, such as selecting where you sit, use of hearing aids, use of other assistive equipment, letting people know you have hearing loss.

Try to manage those things within what you feel to be possible and dignified.

2

Do what you can before you attend

Find out if the Hearing Access Protocol will be followed so you know if basic good practice will be in place.

Don't feel afraid or embarrassed to get in touch with the organiser about hearing access. The more people who ask about it, the more likely it is to become a priority.

Let the organiser know about any specific requirements you have, e.g. a seat at the front, a BSL/English interpreter, speech-to-text transcription, Lip-speaker support.

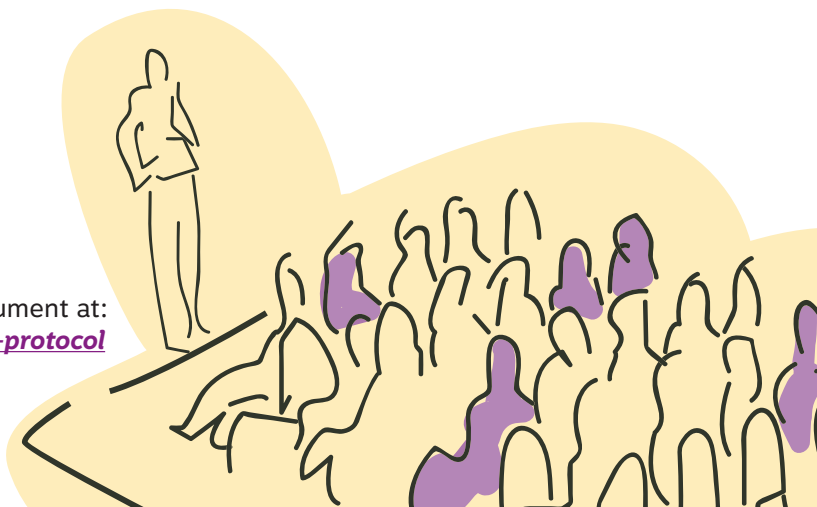
Be confident

Attend a 'Say What you Need' workshop or webinar to build your confidence & knowledge.

Find out more:
info@ideasforears.org.uk



This is a Summary only. Read the full document at:
www.ideasforears.org.uk/hearing-access-protocol



3

Use strategies to help you on the day

Check with the organiser that good practice will be followed.

Advise of any specific requirements you have and guide the organiser on whether you wish others to be informed about your hearing needs, including etiquette to be followed around your assistance dog, if you have one.

Position yourself where you are likely to get the best visual access to people's faces.

If you are unsure, summarise what you think was said so the speaker can confirm or explain again. If necessary, ask people to slow down or speak more clearly.

If you feel able to, let others know you have hearing loss and explain your needs.

4

Don't be hard on yourself

No-one hears everything correctly all the time.

If you are struggling, there is a good chance that others are too. By asking someone to e.g. speak more slowly, you could be helping someone who doesn't feel confident enough to make this request.

During breaks, try to find a quiet area to relax. Intensive listening and following requires considerable mental effort so rest your brain, ears and eyes if you can.

5

Offer feedback

If there are issues on the day, let the organiser know as early as possible so they have a chance to remedy things.

Offer feedback after the event so the organiser knows what worked well and what required improvement. Share details on the impact it had on you.

Remind the organiser about the Hearing Access Protocol and the importance of following the guidance.



The 5 Must-Dos

for speakers and presenters

1

Expect to speak to an audience that includes people with hearing loss

Most audiences, if they are inclusive and representative of the general population, will include people with hearing loss. Ability to hear varies from person to person. Some people may feel sensitive about their hearing and may not wish to disclose the difficulties they experience.

Be skilled

Attend the 'Speaking to a Diverse Audience' workshop or webinar to hone your skills.

Find out more:
info@ideasforears.org.uk

2

Speak with sufficient clarity and volume

Face listeners and, where possible, ensure your face and mouth can be seen at all times.

Speak with sufficient volume and avoid your volume level dipping mid-sentence.

Ensure the pace is suitable and that words are intelligible and spoken with clear diction.

Invite the audience to say if the volume/pace doesn't suit, but also ask a specific individual (e.g. the organiser) to alert you if there is a problem. Attendees do not always feel confident to interrupt.

Avoid moving about where it is known that someone is relying on lipreading.



This is a Summary only. Please read the full Notes for Presenters & Speakers at:
www.ideasforears.org.uk/hearing-access-protocol

An illustration in the top left corner shows several stylized human figures in purple and yellow tones. One figure in the foreground is larger and appears to be speaking or gesturing, while others are smaller and positioned behind, suggesting a group or meeting setting.

3

Be aware that specific forms of support may be required

The majority of people with hearing loss have the ability to hear and follow well or adequately when you speak clearly, the surroundings are appropriate, and microphones are used as they should be. However, some people rely heavily on lipreading, assistive technology, or communication/language support, such as speech-to-text transcription or BSL/English interpretation.

Where it is known that someone has a specific communication need, due consideration to their need should be given throughout the meeting / event.

Check regularly that those using communication support (e.g. text transcription, sign language interpreter) are able to follow things adequately, especially if slides or other visual material is being used. It is challenging to keep track of two sources of input at the same time.

4

Ensure audio-visual materials are prepared appropriately

Include subtitles on videos and audio sound tracks, or alternatively provide a written transcript as a hand-out.

Ensure slides are written in a font size that can be read at the back of the room.

5

Provide written information and hand-outs

Use a flipchart or slides to show names, dates, numbers, acronyms, unusual words and other important information so listeners can be confident they have heard the word correctly.

Provide hand-outs to cover main points and important information so listeners can fill in gaps of any missed information.

Check in advance if any audience members will require easy read materials.

The 5 Must-Dos

for organisers

1

Create the right environment

Select a suitable venue, with little or no background noise and good acoustics. Check that the equipment is what you require, and that everything works. Double check everything to do with the PA system, hearing loop and microphones. See the full Hearing Access Protocol for guidance.

Ask speakers/presenters to review the Notes for Speakers/Presenters so they can prepare accordingly.

On the day, put people at ease by confirming use of the Hearing Access Protocol and its benefit to all. Flag up any aspects that are particularly relevant to that occasion.

Be in control

Webinars, workshops & bespoke support is available to help make your role easier. Find out more: info@ideasforears.org.uk



This is a Summary only. Please read the full Notes for Organisers at: www.ideasforears.org.uk/hearing-access-protocol



2

Allow people to make an informed decision

Advertise that you will be following the Hearing Access Protocol. This will help people decide whether to attend.

Be ready with information about what you can / cannot provide. The best person to determine if your meeting or event is accessible is the individual themselves, so pass on as much relevant detail as you can.

Invite people to alert you to specific or additional requirements. Ensure they know of the arrangements made in response to their request so they are aware of the situation before they attend.

3

Manage support & equipment

Make it easy to share written information. Provide name badges or find some other way to let people see names written down. Provide an agenda to guide people on proceedings. Provide a flipchart so important points can be noted down as the meeting or event unfolds. Share hand-outs that cover the main points.

Check that the sound system/s work. Test the PA system and/or hearing loop system, if they're being used, and also check the microphone/s. If an alternative system to a hearing loop is being made available (e.g. an infrared system) then let attendees know in advance as it may affect their access.

Know how you will accommodate specific requirements. Have procedures in place for booking communication and language professionals, for attendance of assistance dogs, and for other requests that may come up.

Be ready to provide basic instruction on any equipment being provided. Also be aware that not everyone knows about or is experienced in using equipment. For example, not all hearing aid users know the value of a hearing loop and not all will have a loop/t-setting on their hearing aid/s to allow them to use it.

4

Have a suitable level of awareness and knowledge

Avoid assumptions. Do not assume that you will be able to tell when someone isn't hearing well. People can become very adept at bluffing and can appear to hear even when they do not.

Respect people's dignity and privacy. Avoid placing individuals in a position of scrutiny or vulnerability by highlighting their hearing limitations to the wider group, unless you have their permission to do so.

Build your skills. Consider developing greater skills in communicating with people who have hearing loss through deaf awareness training and BSL training.

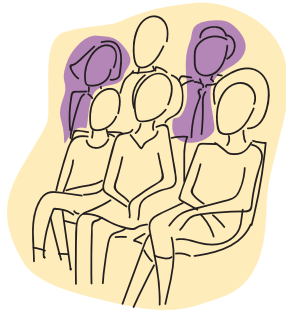
5

Request feedback

Proactively gather feedback on hearing-related issues. Make it standard procedure to ask questions about the ease of being able to hear and follow proceedings rather than waiting for it to emerge unasked for. This will prompt those unused to commenting on the subject and will also encourage those who may feel sensitive or shy about raising any concerns they may have.

Make it the norm

Help the good practice guidance in the Hearing Access Protocol to become widely used in all meetings, conferences and events.



Individuals

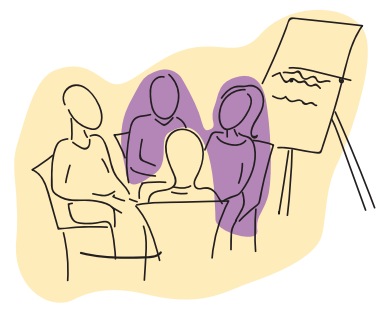
Please ask meeting, conference & event organisers to follow the Hearing Access Protocol.

Please pass them this leaflet.



Organisers & organisations

Please adopt the good practice and become proficient in delivering it. Learn how it fits within an architecture of inclusiveness.



Groups & clubs

Please invite members to complete a 'Survey on Hearing Access'. It is a great way to introduce discussion about hearing & deafness.

Get in touch

Ask us to help you get things right

ideasforears.org.uk

Email: info@ideasforears.org.uk

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