

## Guide to “Reasonable Adjustment” for Employers of Deaf people

“Equality law recognises that bringing about equality for disabled people may mean changing the way in which employment is structured, the removal of physical barriers and/or providing extra support for a disabled worker.

This is the duty to make reasonable adjustments.”  
(<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>)

The term “reasonable adjustment” is open to interpretation. However, this leaflet aims to give you guidance on how you can support your Deaf staff.

Firstly, the aim must always be, as far as possible, to remove or reduce any disadvantage faced by your Deaf worker(s).

Much will depend on the following factors:

- The size of your company
- The type of work your employee carries out
- The cost and the availability of financial support
- Your Deaf worker.

### Deaf worker with English skills

For example, if your Deaf worker has qualifications that prove their English is adequate for the work, then the BDA would consider reasonable adjustments would include:

- Providing equipment or software (e.g. Skype or OoVoo) that enables them to communicate using IT
- Using text messaging as a means of communicating
- Meetings involving more than 2 people could be managed with speech to text or Sign Language Interpreters (if the Deaf person uses British Sign Language (BSL)).

### Example 1

You are a manager of a Deaf person who has proficient lipreading skills and is able to use English. You need to have a short face-to-face meeting to discuss some aspects of work.

The BDA considers the following to be “reasonable adjustment”:

- Equipment such as iPad or laptop to type any difficult words or phrases to avoid any possible misunderstandings.

### Our vision

Deaf people fully participating and contributing as equal and valued citizens in wider society



### **Deaf worker lacking English skills**

If your Deaf employee does not have an adequate command of English but is still able to carry out the work for which they are employed (e.g. a fork-lift driver), the BDA would consider the following to be reasonable adjustments:

- Providing equipment or software (e.g. Skype or OoVoo) that enables them to use Video Interpreting Services to communicate
- Meetings conducted using Sign Language Interpreters.

### **Example 2**

You are a manager of a Deaf person who is a BSL user and does not have sufficient skills to be able to understand written English. You need to have a short meeting to discuss some aspects of work.

The BDA considers the following to be “reasonable adjustment”:

- Utilising a Sign Language Interpreter either face to face or using a remote video facility (which can be used via iPad or a laptop).

### **Example 3**

There is a general meeting that includes the entire workforce to discuss potential redundancies.

The BDA considers the following to be “reasonable adjustment”:

- Employing a Sign Language Interpreter (or perhaps two if the meeting is likely to be longer than one hour) to ensure that the Deaf person receives the same information as the rest of the workforce and is not placed at a disadvantage.

### **Need for “practicality”**

In both cases, the BDA does not consider written either in typed or handwritten formats to be reasonable adjustment because the Deaf person will not fully understand the English. According to Equality law, reasonable adjustment has to be “practical” and resorting to written formats is – in the BDA’s view – not practical.

### **Access to Work**

In most cases, Access to Work is able to assist your company in ensuring ease of communication with your Deaf employee. Your company should contact Access to Work within a few days of employing a Deaf employee to establish what is required.

### **Additional advice**

The BDA is always willing to assist in any way we can, so if you are unsure about how best to support your Deaf employee (which also benefits your company!) please do contact us.

To contact the British Deaf Association,  
please look at our website:

[www.bda.org.uk](http://www.bda.org.uk)

**Email:** bda@bda.org.uk  
**OoVoo:** bda.britdeafassoc  
**Skype:** bda.britdeafassoc