

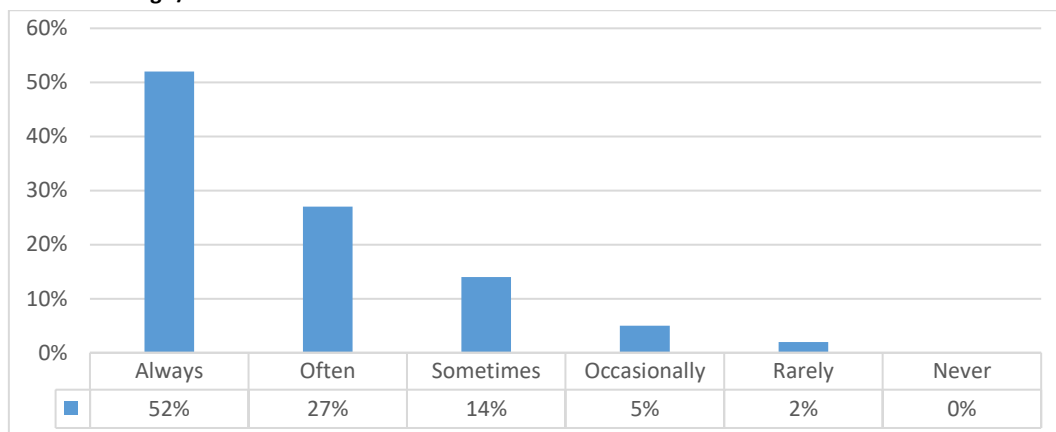
## FINDINGS REPORT:

### Experiences of people with hearing loss in meetings & events

#### 1. Prevalence of difficulties

Of 362 people with hearing loss who answered questions about their experiences of attending meetings and events, more than three quarters (77%) said they always or often experience difficulties in being able to hear and follow what is being said. A further 14% said they sometimes experience difficulties, with 5% saying the occasionally did and 2% saying they rarely did.

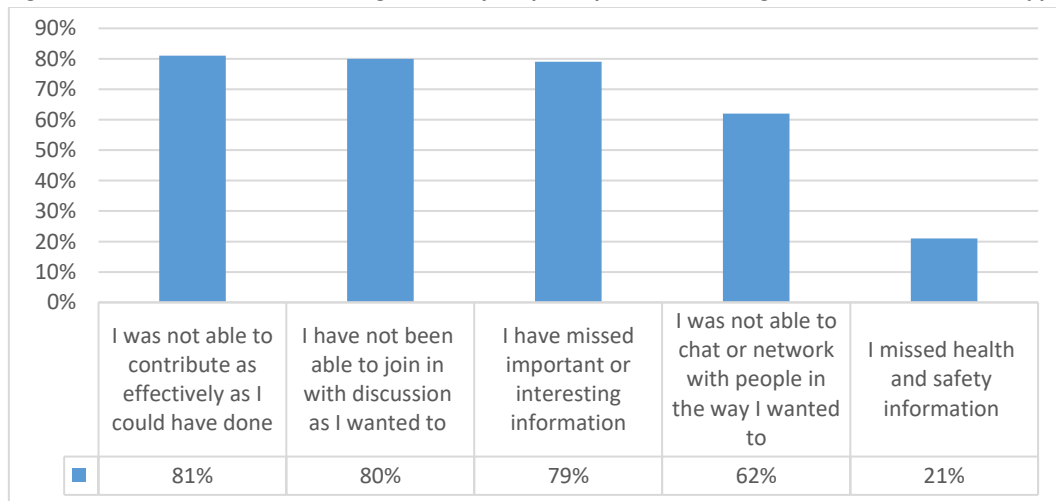
**Fig 1: Frequency with respondents with some degree of hearing loss experience difficulties in hearing or following what's said at meetings / events**



#### 2. Reduced participation

The consequences resulting from people not being able to hear and follow things appropriately are significant. A big majority of the respondents (81%) said they were not able to contribute as effectively as they could have done; 80% said they were not able to join in with discussion as they wanted to, and 79% said they had missed important or interesting information. Nearly two thirds (62%) said they could not chat or network as they wanted and, crucially, a fifth said they missed health and safety information (21%).

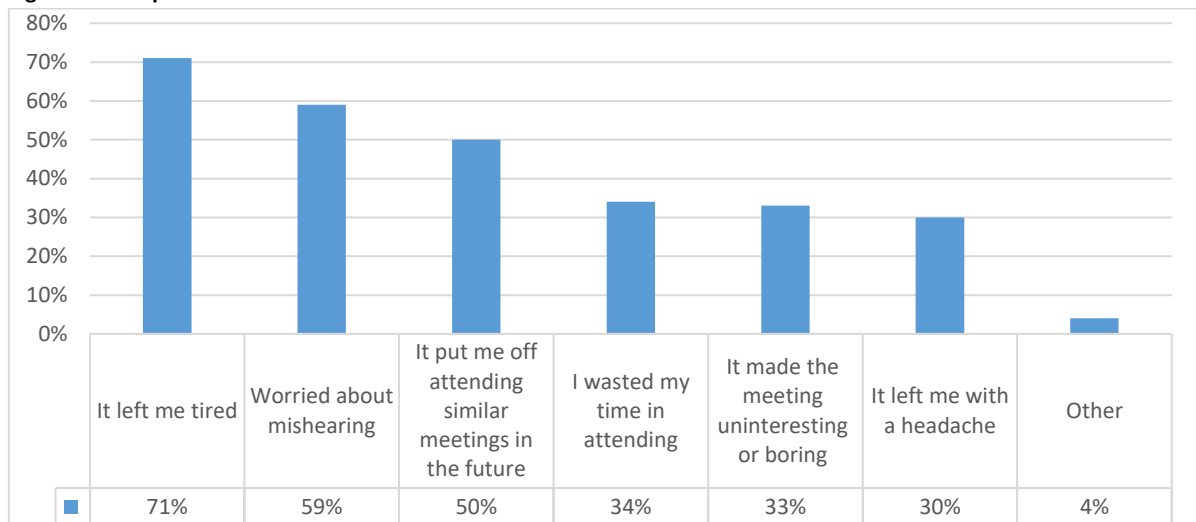
**Fig 2: How have difficulties in hearing affected your participation in meetings/events? Select all that apply.**



### 3. Impact on well-being

As well as people being blocked from information, discussion and conversation, there are further impacts, notably on well-being and attitude. A clear majority of respondents (71) said they came away from meetings/ events feeling tired, with 59% said they worried during the meeting about mishearing, and 30% said they have been left with headaches. Half of the respondents (50%) said they have been put off attending similar meetings/events in the future, and a third (34%) said they felt they had wasted their time in attending, with the same number (33%) saying it made the meeting uninteresting or boring.

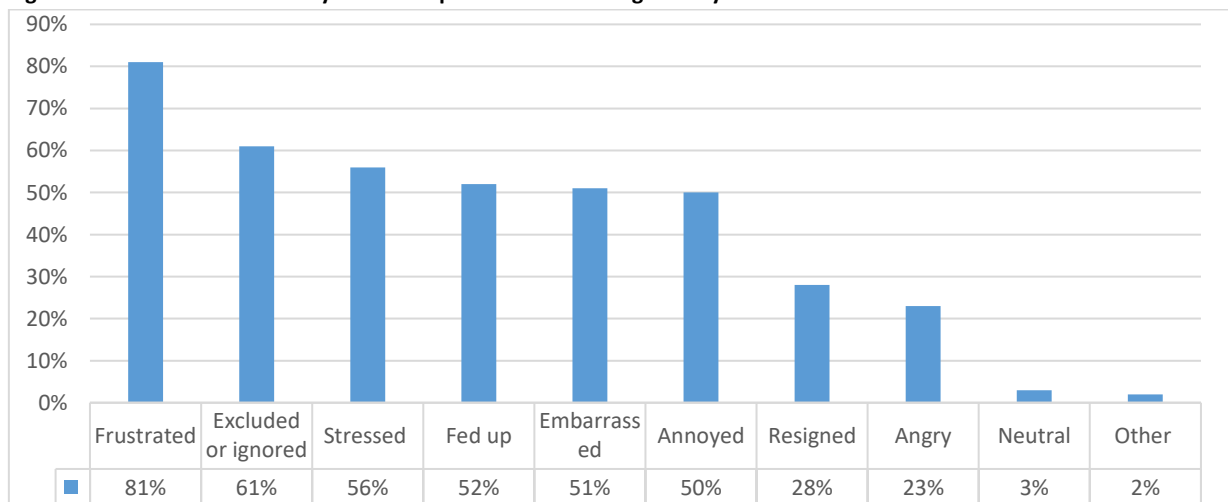
**Fig 3: What impact did this have?**



### 4. Feelings are running high

People are feeling the impact, with 81% of respondents saying it made them feel frustrated, 61% saying it made them feel excluded or ignored, and 56% saying it made them feel stressed. They also experience feeling fed up (52%), embarrassed (51%), annoyed (50%), resigned (28%), angry (23%). Just 3% said they felt neutral about the difficulties.

**Fig 4: How have the difficulties you have experienced in hearing made you feel?**

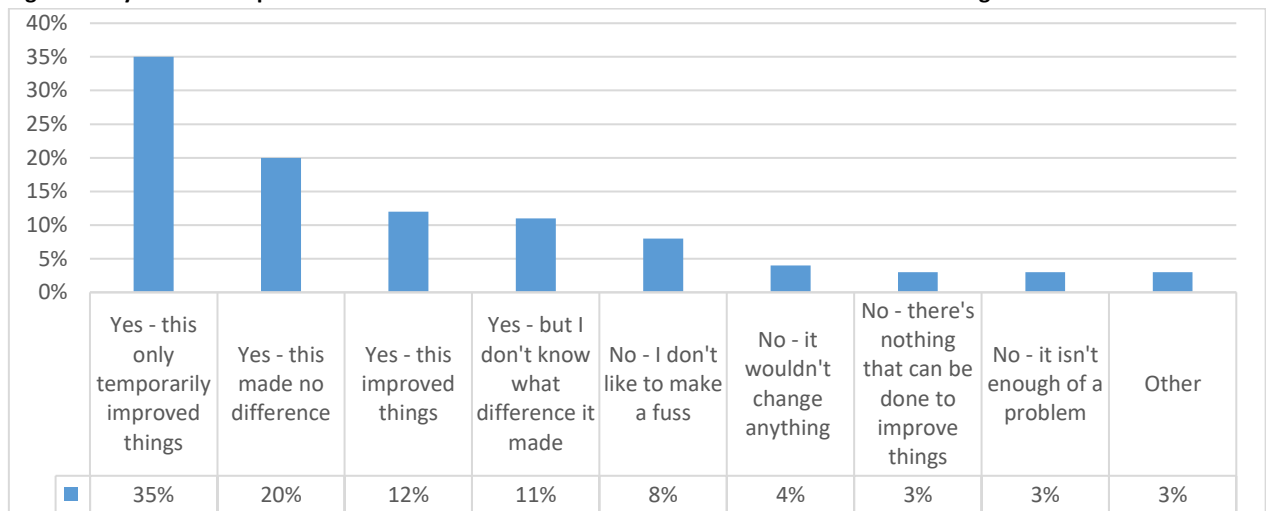


## 5. Complaints go unaddressed

Complaining or highlighting the difficulties being experienced doesn't seem to resolve things. Just 12% of respondents said that a complaint had improved the situation. One in six respondents (20%) said it made no difference, with just over a third (35%) saying it only temporarily made a difference.

Other respondents said they hadn't taken steps to complain, with 8% saying they didn't like to make a fuss, 4% saying it wouldn't change anything, 3% saying nothing can be done to improve things and 3% saying it wasn't enough of a problem.

**Fig 5: Have you ever complained or told someone that it has been difficult to hear and follow things?**

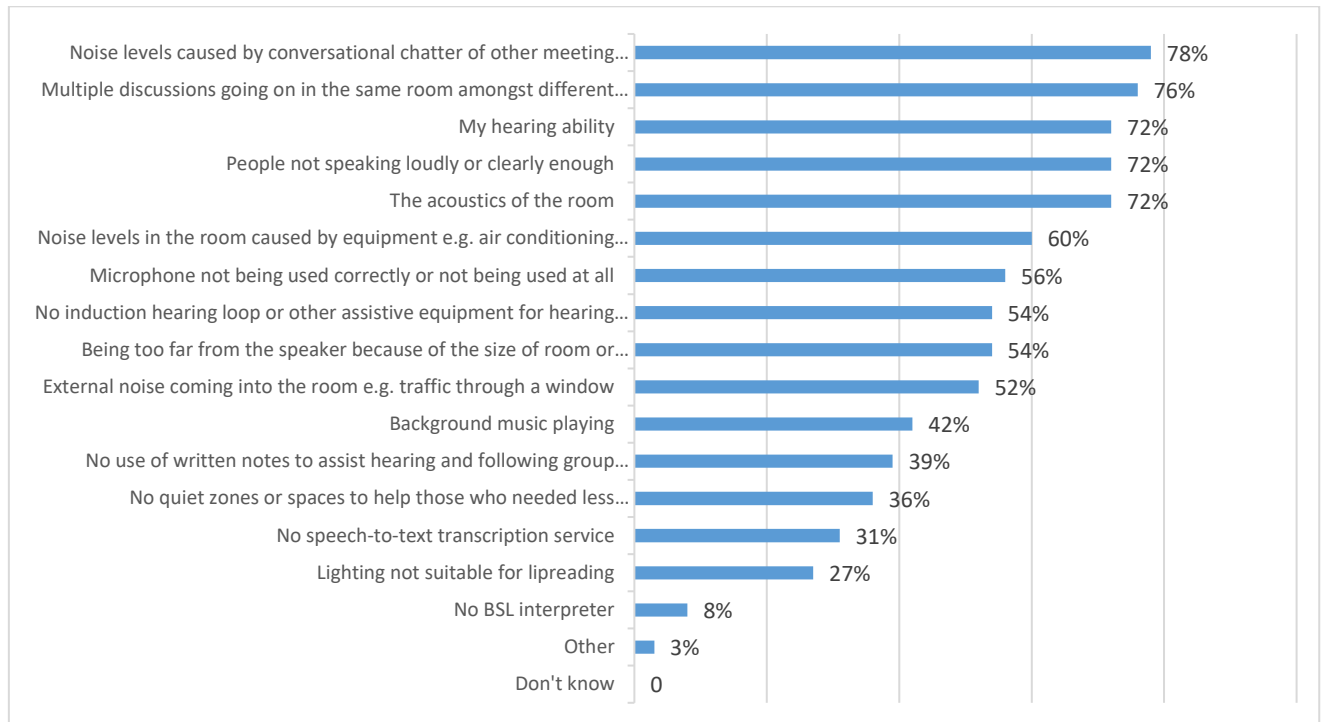


## 6. Cause of the difficulties

Respondents were asked to identify what it was that was making it hard for them to hear and follow things. The most common issue was around noise caused by other people's voices: either conversational chatter (78%) or because simultaneous discussions were being held in the same room (76%). Respondents also recognised that their own hearing ability was part of the problem, with 72% flagging this up. The same number said that the problem lay with people not speaking loudly or clearly enough, and the same number again said it lay with the acoustics of the room.

Noise from equipment in the room was highlighted by 60% of respondents, with noise coming into the room (e.g. traffic through a window) being an issue for 52%, and noise from background music being an issue for 42%. Poor or no use of microphones was noted by 56%, with slightly fewer 54% saying it was caused by the lack of a hearing loop. Other issues flagged up included being too far from the speaker (54%), lack of written notes (39%), lack of quiet zones/spaces (36%), lighting not being suitable for lipreading (27%), and no BSL interpreter (8%).

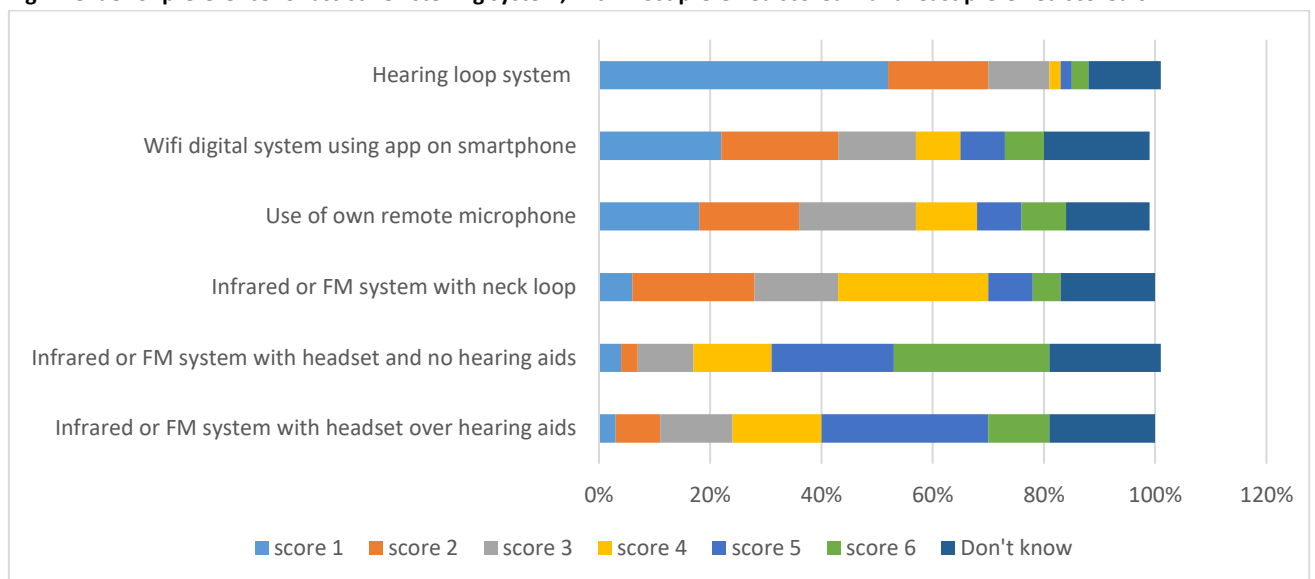
**Fig 6: Can you identify what has caused the difficulties that you have had in hearing and following what's said in meetings/events? Select all that apply.**



## 7. Hearing loops retain top place, with new digital wifi systems coming second

Respondents were asked about their preferences for assistive listening systems. 70% gave a score of 1 or 2 to hearing loops, with 42% giving a score of 1 or 2 to digital wifi systems. Next favourite was use of personal remote microphones (36% gave this system a score of 1 or 2), followed by an Infrared or FM system with neck loop (28%). Bottom of the list were systems that required use of a headset over hearing aids (given a score of 1 or 2 by 10% of respondents) or without hearing aids (7%).

**Fig 7: Order of preference for assistive listening system, with most preferred scored 1 and least preferred scored 6.**



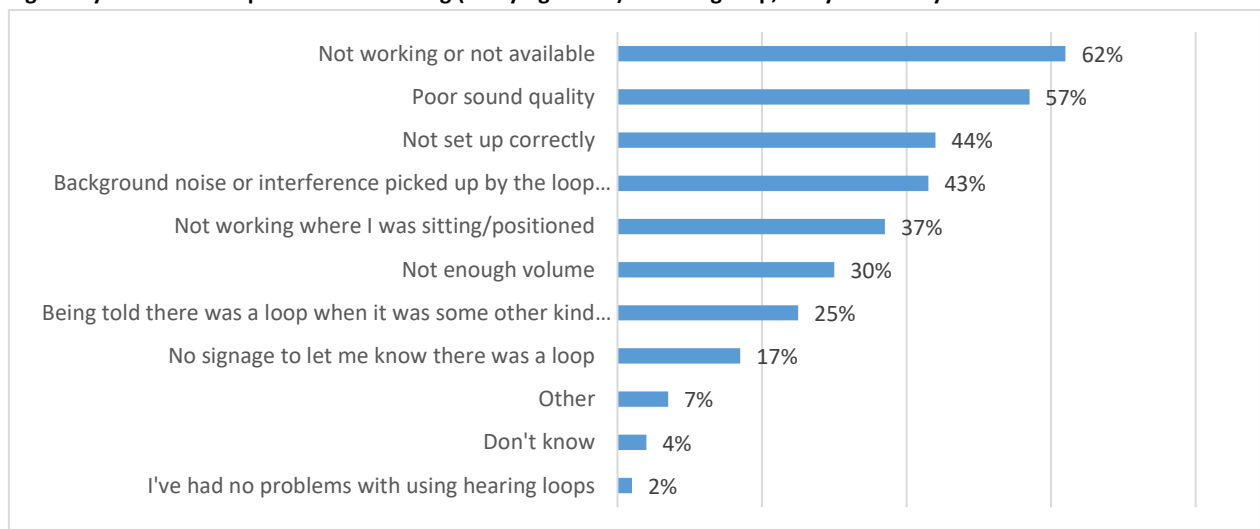
## 8. Hearing loops are popular but problematic

Respondents were asked about their use of a hearing loop and 210 were able to give feedback. One third (34%) said their experiences were typically very good or good, with nearly a quarter (23%) saying their experiences were typically poor or very poor. A further quarter (24%) said their experiences were too variable to generalise, with 20% saying their experiences were typically neither good or poor.

Just 2% (of the 210 respondents who have used a hearing loop) said they had no problems with hearing loops. All others identified problems. Nearly two thirds (62%) said they'd experienced a hearing loop not working or not being available, 57% said they'd experienced poor sound quality and 44% said they'd experienced the hearing loop not being set up properly. Other issues were caused by the hearing loop picking up background noise (43%), it not working where they were positioned (37%), the volume being set too low (30%) and the lack of signage to alert them to it (17%).

For 25% of respondents, the problem was caused by them being told a hearing loop was available when in fact it was another system that required use of a neck loop or other piece of equipment.

**Fig 8: If you have had a problem when using (or trying to use) a hearing loop, can you identify what it was?**



## 9. Respondent profile

Fig 9: Age of respondents

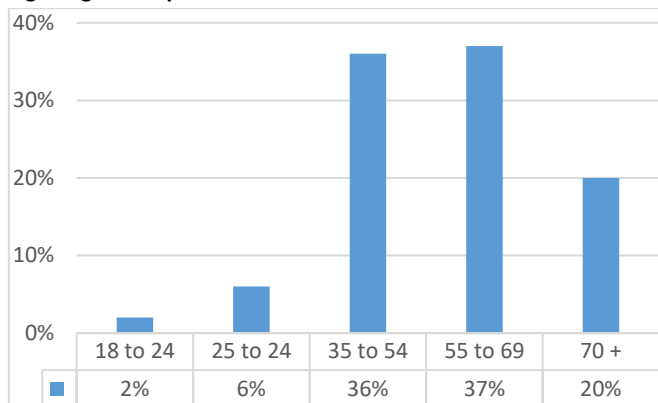


Fig 10: Gender of respondents

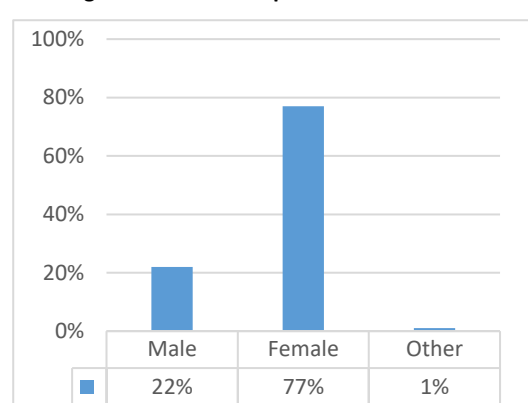
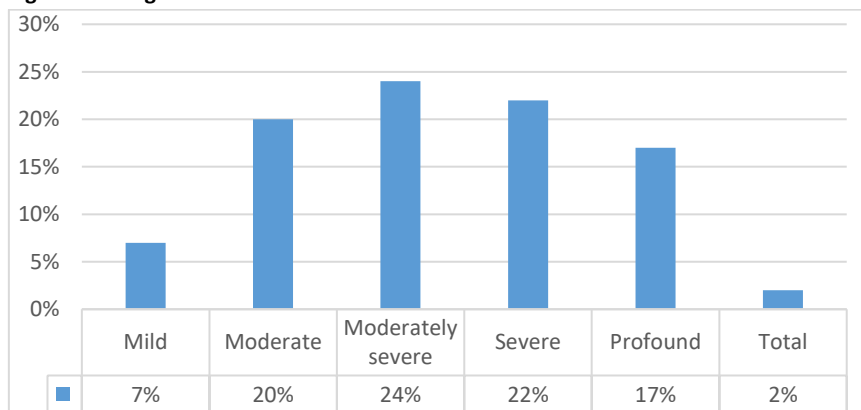


Fig 11. Hearing loss in better ear



For more information about this survey research and the findings, contact Sally Shaw, director of Ideas for Ears, at [sally.shaw@ideasforears.org.uk](mailto:sally.shaw@ideasforears.org.uk) or at 07739 581059

Read the blog: <https://www.ideasforears.org.uk/uncategorised/meetings-miss-the-mark-due-to-hostile-hearing-conditions/>

Review the SHIP Protocols, a practical set of instructions for running meetings and events: <https://www.ideasforears.org.uk/for-individuals/ship/>

### About Ideas for Ears

Ideas for Ears is a social enterprise led by people with hearing loss. It promotes the principles of co-design by encouraging collaboration between the people who design and provide products, services and facilities and those who use them. By doing so, it supports businesses and organisations in engaging more effectively with people with hearing loss. It is based in central Scotland but works on projects across the UK. [www.ideasforears.org.uk](http://www.ideasforears.org.uk)

