

LAUNCH

Deaf are excluded by badly run meetings

But new guide help them play more important role

Chris Marzella

A Dunblane company's new guide could improve deaf people's attendance at meetings and social events.

Called Ideas for Ears, it aims to improve the way meetings and events are run to make them more accessible for everyone.

It sets out examples of good practices and also includes suggestion about adjustments that can be made to help people with hearing problems.

Common issues such as poor acoustics, a presenter who is hard to understand and background noise can all act as barriers to participation for people with hearing loss.

Director of Ideas for Ears Sally Shaw said: "The number of people with hearing loss in the UK is growing as the population ages.

"We're also seeing an increase in the number of younger people with hearing loss due to noisy lifestyle choices.

"Despite how common hearing loss is, little attention is paid as to how people will hear and follow things in meetings and events. It means that many individuals are having poor experiences and being placed in situations that are frustrating and stressful.

"If you cannot properly follow the proceedings it's difficult or impossible to contribute, which makes it pointless attending in the first place.

"This undermines the value and purpose of meetings and



Launch Ideas for Ears unveil their guide

events, especially those that are about public consultation and community engagement."

Ideas for Ears hopes the guide will be adopted as good practice for all meetings and events.

Sally added: "There is a huge variation in the way people hear and this needs to be recognised and responded to.

"There is no single adjustment that can be made that will adequately meet the needs of all, but it isn't as complicated as it may seem.

"The guide sets things out in a clear and practical way, covering everything from speaking clearly and facing the audience, to hearing loops and support

from BSL/English sign language interpreters."

A community hearing hub group in Stirling came up with the idea of a guide.

Hub member Alan Blue said: "As someone who has hearing difficulties, I have experienced first-hand how it feels not to be able to follow a meeting because I have missed what someone said.

"What started as a chat with Sally at Ideas for Ears over a coffee a couple of years ago led us to create a hearing hub to address these issues and ultimately to help develop the protocol that we are launching today.

"We hope the guide will

transform standards everywhere and bring real benefits to the millions of people with hearing loss living in the UK."

Mid Scotland and Fife MSP Alexander Stewart said: "I echo Ideas for Ears' hopes that this protocol will be adopted across Scotland as well as the UK as proper practice for all meetings and events, which will bring about substantial change for these millions of people with hearing loss."

Ideas for Ears is based in High Street, Dunblane, and the guide was launched last week at Go Live at the Green, a cultural event held to coincide with the Glasgow 2018 European Championships.



Support Sally Shaw with Alexander Stewart MSP