



Hearing access

what it is and why it matters every bit as much as mobility access

This booklet will help you to understand the basics about hearing access and how it is relevant to you and others.

Hearing access recognises how enormously we rely on spoken language as well as the fundamental importance of communication to human nature.

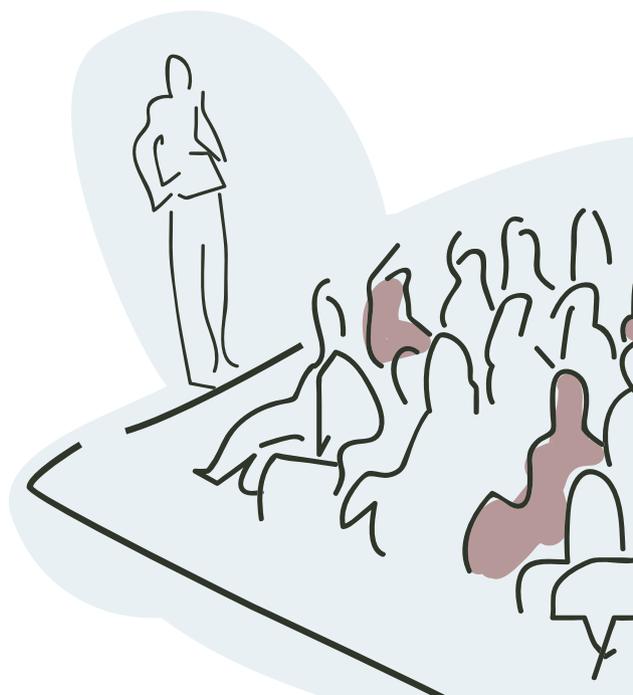
Hearing access is about making it **more possible for more people to more easily** hear and follow the spoken word and other audible information. It is crucial for ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion and is as valid and vital as physical/mobility access.

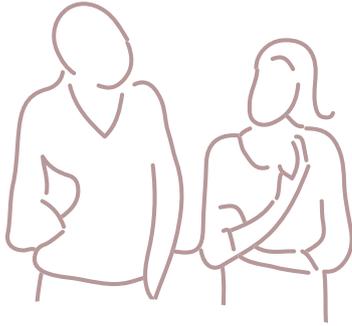
What's the problem?

Level of hearing is often **NOT** the determinant for how well someone will hear and follow what is said. Most people with hearing loss have the capability to hear and follow what is said well or adequately, so long as the environment is right.

For instance, it is perfectly possible for the same person to hear and follow a conversation with effortless ease – then an hour later to find it impossible to discern any of what is said. The dramatic difference is not caused by a sudden change in the individual's actual hearing, it is caused by environment, the situation, and/or the people being engaged with.

Hearing access is about managing the elements that affect the way people hear and follow what is said and that an individual on their own cannot control.





Transformation is possible

There is no need for people with hearing loss to struggle as much and as often as they do. Poor experiences are often linked with issues that are fixable. For instance, audio equipment can be installed, upgraded and made easier to use. Noise levels and echo can be improved with acoustic treatments. Important information can be written down.

The practical application of hearing access encompasses:

- 1 Creation of environments where noise and acoustics are managed so noise levels don't build and sound doesn't echo and spread
- 2 Provision of the right audio equipment (PA systems, hearing loops, microphones) and ensuring they are set up and used appropriately and effectively
- 3 Presenters and speakers being aware of their volume, pace and diction
- 4 Management of details such as lighting, visual distractions, room layout, visibility of speakers/mouths
- 5 Using text-based information to support audible information

Just like a walkie talkie

Communication by spoken language is a two-part process: it needs to be both transmitted and received. Without both parts, it does not work.



Duty to provide hearing access

There are legal duties to ensure access and to attend to the rights of all groups of the population.

- Equality Act 2010 – sets out the requirement to avoid discriminating against disabled people, including those with hearing loss
- **Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1998** – sets out the right to information
- Public sector duties including the Patient Rights Act 2011 (in Scotland) and the Accessible Information Standard (in England & Wales)
- **UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities** – recognises the requirement to ensure disabled people get support so they can enjoy the same rights as everyone else

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals must also be met. Two highly relevant goals that hearing access helps to deliver on are:

- **Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities**
- **Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities & Communities**

Support for hearing access is steadily growing

It is vitally important that we consider how hearing access is prioritised to ensure greater public involvement and participation in the many varied events that we have.

Mark Griffin MSP and Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Deafness

Hearing access needs to be a priority, and I support the Ideas for Ears' view that among people in Scotland who have hearing loss, the majority have the capability to hear and follow what is being said well or adequately as long as the environment is right. Sadly, by and large, the environment in many workplaces, including this one, is still not right for people with hearing loss.

Jeremy Balfour MSP and Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Disability

The communication framework



Hearing access in meetings

Hearing access requires particular attention when it comes to meetings, conferences and events. To guide the requirements of what is needed, the UK's first Hearing Access Protocol has been published.

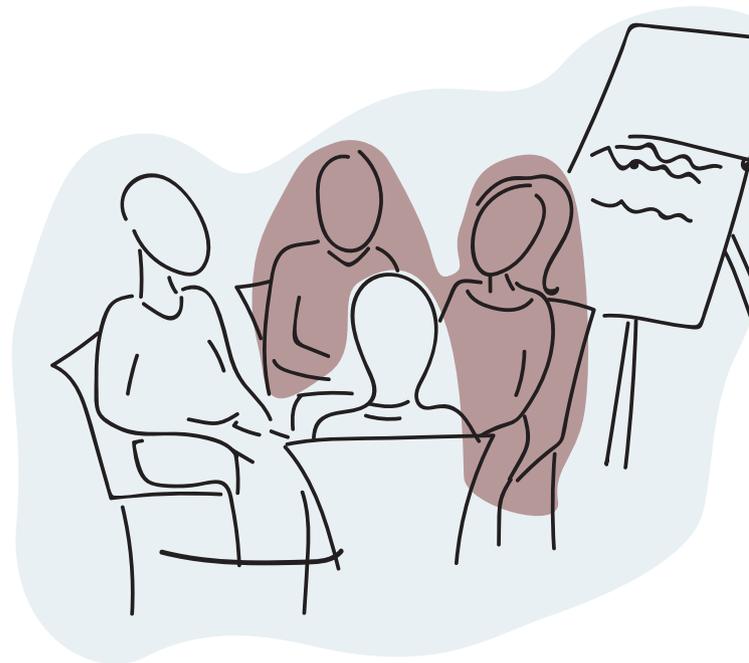
Good practice in general

Much of the guidance in the Hearing Access Protocol is good practice in general and can benefit people far beyond those with hearing loss. It sets out simple, practical steps that can be helpful to everyone, whatever their hearing is like.

The Hearing Access Protocol sets out the roles and responsibilities for different parties in ensuring hearing access is delivered.

Within it you will find **Must-Dos** for:

- Everyone attending that meeting/event
- People with hearing loss
- Presenters/speakers
- Organiser of the meeting/event
- Facility manager/owner of the venue





Emerged from the community

The Hearing Access Protocol is a tool with grass roots origins. It was developed by Ideas for Ears through community consultation and collaboration and is supported by deafscotland, the Scottish health & Social Care Alliance and Disability Equality Scotland. It is being taken forward through continued partnership and collaboration.



The Hearing Access Protocol serves not only as an essential framework for colleagues with sensory loss, but also builds towards an architecture of inclusivity for all, within which we may communicate, collaborate and contribute to our full potential.

Prof Ian Welsh OBE, Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland



I'm grateful that the See Hear National Coordinator worked closely with partners to support and promote the Ideas for Ears' Hearing Access Protocol for ensuring accessible meeting spaces throughout the country.

Scottish Government Minister, Clare Haughey MSP & Minister for Mental Health



Recognition

The leadership of Ideas for Ears on hearing access issues was recognised at the 2019 Scottish Sensory and Equality Awards.

- Sally Shaw, founding director of Ideas for Ears, was named Scottish Sensory and Equality Champion of the Year for her work on hearing access.
- Ideas for Ears was recognised for its 'outstanding practice, innovation and dedication to sensory loss and inclusion in Scotland'; and for its 'multi-sensory and inclusive communication approach in communications (accessible information for all people) in Scotland'.

Workshops on Hearing Access

Unique & brand new!

A great way to enhance equality, diversity and inclusion.
Book **NOW** for your staff team or community group.

Workshop title

Brilliant for

Hearing access:
what it means and why it matters

Everyone

Becoming a confident advocate for the
communication support that is right for you

People with hearing loss

Meeting the Must-Do requirements of the
Hearing Access Protocol

Meeting / Event Organisers
& Access Hosts

Masterclass or novice-class on pace, volume,
diction and delivery style

Presenters
& Speakers

Immersive experience: use a new digital tool
to hear like someone else

Everyone wishing to
understand hearing loss

Troubleshooting audio equipment:
what's what and what's required

Venues, Organisers
& Access Hosts

Book today!

We'll help you get things right

Email: info@ideasforears.org.uk

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Ideas for Ears is a not-for-profit social enterprise
led by people with hearing loss. It is progressive,
fresh-thinking and all about meaningful end results.