

Deafness and hearing loss

Deafness or hearing loss is a condition where an individual experiences a partial or complete loss of their ability to hear. This can occur in one or both ears and can range from mild to profound. Hearing loss can be temporary or permanent and may affect a person's ability to hear and understand sounds in various frequencies and volumes. It can be caused by various factors, including congenital, infection, age related, noise exposure and physical trauma. It is important to note that hearing loss is broad and encompasses a wide range of conditions, each with its own unique characteristics and challenges.

People with hearing loss may experience the following symptoms or behaviours:

- Frequently asking people to repeat themselves.
- Misunderstanding or misinterpreting what others are saying.
- Struggling to follow conversations, especially in noisy environments.
- Experiencing ringing, buzzing, hissing, or other phantom sounds in the ears, which can be a symptom of hearing loss.
- Finding it particularly challenging to hear and understand the person on the other end of a phone or headset.
- Having trouble hearing in busy noisy environments.
- Feeling tired or stressed after straining to hear and understand conversations.

Supporting employees with deafness or hearing loss

The following list outlines possible reasonable adjustments intended for employees with deafness or hearing loss. It is imperative to acknowledge the inherent variability in each individual's requirements, as reasonable adjustments should be tailored to both the specific needs of the individual and the demands of their respective role. Managers should also seek support from the EDI team to carry out a risk assessment for hearing impaired employees. This list is not exhaustive, and it is important to seek advice from the EDI team before implementing reasonable adjustments by emailing

Reasonable.Adjustments@sthk.nhs.uk

- Utilising video calling to allow the employee to sign or lip-read.
- Voice to text software to aid employee communication.
- Consider working or office location to minimise background noise.
- Consider lighting to assist with the employee both seeing everyone clearly and lipreading.
- Speaking one at a time in meetings and using the hands up feature in Teams.
- Assistive headset for phone users.
- Amplified stethoscopes.