



A national charity
since 1911

Managing Hearing Loss and Tinnitus During Covid-19

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How to use the pack

This pack acts as an introduction to D/deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus. Throughout the pack there are useful links highlighted in **blue**. **Click on the word to follow the links.**

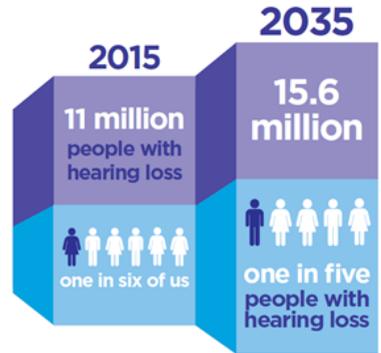
Introduction

Who We Are:

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) is the national charity supporting the **12 million** individuals who are [D/deaf](#), have [hearing loss](#) or [tinnitus](#) in the UK today.

Action on Hearing Loss exists to help people confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss to live the life they choose. We enable them to take control of their lives and remove the barriers in their way.

Our vision is a world where hearing loss doesn't limit or label people, where tinnitus is silenced and where people value their hearing.



Why it matters:

Hearing loss is a life-changing condition that affects people **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. Research points to the links between hearing loss and increased risk of social isolation, poor mental health, and early cognitive decline. Similarly, those with tinnitus often battle with feelings of isolation and anxiety.

Face-to-face interactions are vital for reducing isolation for those with hearing loss, and ensuring they are able to communicate effectively with those around them. During these times when so many services are moving online or over the phone, it is key that individuals with hearing loss are able to continue to access services to reduce the risks of further isolation.

There are various levels of hearing loss, including profound deafness. Many of the **120,000** D/deaf individuals living in the UK today will use British Sign Language as their first language. Without access to resources and support in sign language they will miss out on vital information and can become more isolated.

These issues affect not only older people, but also those in the workforce who are now facing new challenges as the country continues to work remotely, as this [article](#) by the Guardian highlights.

For more information, please see our [Hearing Matters](#) Report.

What is Hearing Loss?

There are a range of [causes of hearing loss](#) including wax, infection or diseased. [noise exposure](#) or aging. [Age related](#) hearing loss is the single biggest cause of hearing loss, which is caused by the gradual wear and tear to tiny sensory cells called 'hair cells' in the cochlea (your hearing organ in the inner ear).

Signs of Hearing Loss:

There might be many different signs that someone might have a hearing loss. These are some of the more common ones.

- Finding it difficult to follow conversations in noisy places or in a group
- Having the TV or radio on very loudly
- Reporting that other people are mumbling
- Struggling to hear on the phone
- Asking others to repeat themselves
- Watching your lips when talking to you
- Appearing withdrawn or taking part less often
- Not responding when spoken too



Let's Talk Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a noise in one or both ears that has no external source. People describe their tinnitus in lots of different ways e.g. ringing, buzzing, whistling or a range of other sounds. Tinnitus is very common and affects **1 in 8** adults across the UK of all ages.

At the moment there is no cure for tinnitus, however there are different strategies that can be adopted to manage it, including:



- Tinnitus clinic or support group
- Tinnitus retraining therapy
- Counselling
- Relaxation techniques
- Diet & exercise
- Complementary medicine
- Equipment, including tinnitus maskers
- Hearing aids

Tinnitus can get worse during times of stress or periods of change. Due to the changes to our lives that Coronavirus has caused, people may be struggling with their Tinnitus more than ever. However, with the right support, it can become more manageable.

For help and information, contact our Tinnitus helpline:

Call: 0808 808 6666

Text Message: 07800 000360 (text only)

Email: tinnitushelpline@hearingloss.org.uk

Or visit the [British Tinnitus association](#) for a wide range of information, resources and support and information about tinnitus in [isolation](#).

Hearing Loss, Tinnitus and Mental Health

In these trying times, looking after our [mental health](#) and wellbeing is more important than ever. This is especially true for those who have hearing loss of any form; **1 in 2** people with hearing loss will struggle with their mental health during their lifetime, compared to **1 in 4** of the general public.



A blog by [NHS England](#) explains that it is not deafness or hearing loss itself that causes people to struggle with their mental health but instead the societal and cultural factors, such as communication and attitudes towards deafness. Alongside this, isolation and loneliness can also contribute to mental health problems.

During this period of extended isolation, people with hearing loss will be experiencing loneliness and isolation more than ever, especially as services they would normally access move to phone calls, which they may struggle to interact with.

The main way that you can support someone with hearing loss and/or tinnitus and their mental health at this time is to empathise with their situation. Trying to understand will help to reduce feelings of isolation and validate people's concerns.

For more resources to support people with their mental health please see below:

Mental Health and Hearing Loss: [Action on Hearing Loss's](#) resources dedicated to mental health

Mental Health and Tinnitus: [British Tinnitus Association](#)

Mental Health support for BSL users (including a crisis text service): [Sign Health](#), [Shout](#)

General resources about Mental Health: [Mind](#), [Mental Health Foundation](#), [Samaritans](#), [NHS Every Mind Matters](#)

How Can We Help?

We can provide a wide range of information about [hearing loss](#), [hearing aids](#), [assistive equipment](#), [communication support](#) and much more.

Resources:

On our [website](#) we have a wide range of leaflets and factsheets

For our specific [coronavirus](#) response please also see our website.



This information can provide a life line for those who are struggling with their hearing during this time of increased isolation, especially for those with unaddressed hearing loss.

**For more information, please contact our national
Information Line:**

Call: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 900

Email: information@hearingloss.org.uk

Or **Live Chat** on our [website](#)

For information in **BSL**, you can book an appointment here: [BSL](#)

Or contact your local Information Officer:

Name: Jason Sculthorpe

Email: Jason.Sculthorpe@hearingloss.org.uk

Phone: 01752 228657

Support in your area

Devon County Council Sensory Services

Tel: 03451551007

Email: csc.caredirect@devon.gov.uk

www.devon.gov.uk

Services available at the moment: Referrals accepted in the normal way, where they can do assessments or offer advice over the phone.

The outreach service and Soundbase have been closed until rules about social distancing are eased.

Derriford hospital Audiology Department

University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust

Level 7

Derriford Hospital

Plymouth

PL6 8DH

Tel: Adult appointments: 01752 431253/4

Tel: Paediatric appointments: 01752 431251

www.plymouthhospitals.nhs.uk/audiology

Services available at the moment: Maintaining a basic service by either post or by phone. Batteries can be ordered by post. Only doing face to face appointments where absolutely necessary.

Sensory Solutions

Improving Lives Plymouth

156 Mannamead Road

Plymouth

PL3 5QL

Tel: 01752 201899

SMS: 07496 950013

Email: sensorysolutions@improvinglivesplymouth.org.uk

www.improvinglivesplymouth.org.uk

Services available at the moment: Information, advice and guidance, plus hearing aid battery and tube postal service.

Specsavers Hearing Care

www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing

Services available at the moment: All routine appointments have been cancelled. Only emergency appointments are available. Information, advice and guidance being offered by video/phone calls on their RE-MOTECARE service. Please see the national website for a store near you.

Leaflets

We have a range of leaflets that's focus on specific areas of hearing loss. Please get in touch with the information line or your local Information team to request a digital copy.



Introduction to Hearing Loss and Tinnitus

- Ear Problems and Treatment
- How's your Hearing
- Understanding Tinnitus

Communication

- Learning to Lipread
- Learning British Sign Language
- Finger Spelling
- Communication tips
- Using Communication Support

Hearing Aids

- Getting Hearing Aids
- Adjusting Your Hearing Aids

Support

- Benefits and Support
- Products

We also offer several leaflets in [easy read](#) and [large print formats](#), and in a selection of [community](#)

Remote Communication

During this difficult period of social isolation, many services and social groups have had to move away from face to face interaction and instead move online, using videos and phone calls.

For people who are D/deaf or have hearing loss, this be extremely isolating as many people cannot hear over the phone or lack the confidence to do so.

However, there are useful digital tools and communication tips that can be used to ensure phone and videos calls are accessible to all.



BSL Interpreting

For remote interpreting there are two ways to do it:

Video relay interpreting (VRI) – this is when all participants are in the same location (physical or virtual) and the sign language interpreter joins remotely using a video conferencing platform such as FaceTime, WhatsApp or Skype.

Video relay service (VRS) – this is when two parties in two separate locations are connected remotely via a sign language interpreter. You can make phone calls through specific service provider platforms, for example [SignLive](#), [SignVideo](#) or [Interpreter Now](#).



Remote Communication Cont.

Text Relay

BT provides the only text relay system across the UK – its Relay UK system. Every communication provider is required to provide access to a text relay service under the Universal Service Obligation, which in effect means Relay UK. The system is required to answer over 90% of calls within 15 seconds, and 95% of emergency calls within 5 seconds

Speech to Text apps

Speech to text (STT) apps can be very useful tools for more informal conversations. These are not regulated and therefore can't guarantee fast and accurate transcriptions and therefore should only be used for informal catch ups. Some useful STT apps are listed below:

- Google
- TextHear (Android)
- Speechnote (Android)
- Hearing Helper (iOS)
- Just press record (iOS)

Remote captioning

Streamtext (this can be a full screen) – works with any platform

Letter box captions (looks like subtitles on your telly) – works with any platform. This is the best option for companies that want to have inclusive meetings and webinars, as everyone can see these subtitles and they work well with PowerPoint slides.

In-vision subtitles with Zoom or MS Teams – can be quite fast and not as easy to read as letter box captions.

Digital Platforms



- Automatic video captions available
- Unlimited one to one video calls
- 40 minute limit on group video meetings with basic package

- Limited live captions available on desktop app
- Audio, video and screen sharing activity can be recorded
- Automatic transcript allows user to play-back conversation and search within the transcript



- Automatic video captions available
- Unlimited video meeting calls for up to 50 people with free package
- Works on phones, tablets and computers with webcams



- Automatic video captions available
- For video calls, phone calls and messages
- Video calls can include up to ten people



Communication tips

for speaking to someone with hearing loss

Always ask: even if someone's wearing a hearing aid, ask if they need to lipread you.

Make sure you have the person's attention before you start speaking.

Find a place to talk that has **good lighting, away from noise and distractions.**

Turn your face towards them so they can easily see your lip movements.

Speak clearly, not too slowly, and use **normal lip movements, facial expressions and gestures.**

Make sure what you're saying is being understood.

If someone doesn't understand what you've said, **try saying it in a different way.**

Keep your voice down: it's uncomfortable for a hearing aid user if you shout, and it looks aggressive.

Get to the point: use plain language and don't waffle.

If you're talking to one person with hearing loss and one without, **focus on both of them.**

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) is the largest UK charity helping people who are confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss. To find out more about what we do and how you can support us, go to actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Deaf friendly phone call tips



Always ask if they are happy to talk on the phone



Summarise the conversation every two to three minutes.



Would they like someone else to talk for them?



Check the person you're talking to is following the conversation.



Would they prefer to use a text relay service or email?



If they don't understand what you've said, try saying it in a different way.



Speak clearly and not too slowly



Keep your voice down: it's uncomfortable for a hearing aid user if you shout, and it can come across as aggressive.



Can they increase the volume on their handset?



Get to the point: use plain language, short sentences and don't waffle.



If possible, take the call somewhere with no background noise.



Avoid using jargon and unfamiliar abbreviations.

Visit our Louder than Words website for more information about supporting staff and customers who are deaf or have hearing loss. www.louderthanwords.org.uk