



WORKING WITH SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

A TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS



CAROLINE MCGROTTY
HAARIS SHEIKH

join the conversation



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Working with Sign Language Interpreters - a toolkit for employers

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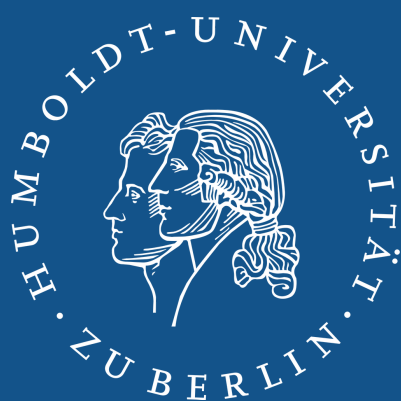
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designs

deaf community employment

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SIGN LANGUAGE USERS

IN THE WORKPLACE

0
1

WORKING WITH
INTERPRETERS

0
2

BUSINESS CASE

0
3

RECRUITING

0
4

IN THE
WORKPLACE

0
5

DISCLOSURE



BOOKING

checklist

01

BOOK

Book an interpreter as soon as you have received a request for one and give the booking agency as much detail about the type of assignment as there may be a need for more than one interpreter for the assignment.

02

PREPARE

Give the interpreter as much preparation material in advance of the assignment. This may include the interview questions, the job specification, background material on the organisation, agenda items and training materials.

03

CHECK IN

On the day of the assignment, ensure the interpreter has arrived and ask them if they have any other questions about the assignment.

04

SHOW

Show the interpreter the room layout, as they may suggest using a different layout which will ensure that the deaf person and the interpreter are in an optimal viewing position during the interview, training session or meeting.

05

EVALUATE

Follow up with the agency and provide feedback or instructions for any future bookings.



interviews or small meetings

- Make sure you look at and speak directly to the deaf person at all times and not at the interpreter who's voice may be coming from beside you or behind you!
- The deaf person will naturally look towards the interpreter when the interpreter is signing and when they respond, they may still look at the interpreter to ensure that the interpreter has understood everything they have signed.
- Remember there will be a slight delay between you asking the question and the interpreted question being put to the deaf person. Allow time for this.
- A delay in responding should not be taken as a reluctance to cooperate.

events or large meetings

- Inform all presenters or facilitators that interpreters will be present at the session.
- The interpreters may sit or stand beside the presenters during the presentations.
- Reserved seating may be required to be put in place to allow the deaf person optimum viewing position.





01

QUALIFIED



02

ETHICS



03

COMPETENCE



04

COST

THINGS TO

REMEMBER

QUALIFIED

use a qualified, professionally trained interpreter, ideally one with interpreting experience in employment settings and has knowledge about your organisation.

ETHICAL

interpreters are bound by a professional code of ethics and confidentiality so book a qualified interpreter from a reputable agency

COMPETENCE

An interpreter who is not qualified will not have the required level of competence, experience, linguistic capacity and context-specific skill and can severely compromise the communication process

COST

Interpreters can be booked directly or through interpreting agencies, and the systems and funding options vary across Europe. Interpreters' rates, terms and conditions vary from country to country, but are typically charged at a 2-hour minimum rate, and sometimes a half day or full day rate

SOUND ADVICE

INSIGHTS FROM INDUSTRY CHAMPIONS



INSIGHTS ...

DR JULES DICKINSON

BSL/ENGLISH INTERPRETER



ENGLISH



EMBEDDED VIDEO



ENGLISH SUBTITLES

INSIGHTS ...

PROFESSOR ROBERT MACINTOSH

HEAD

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY



ENGLISH



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE



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COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSE

ST GEORGE'S MENTAL
HEALTH NHS TRUST



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE



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CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER /
DIVISIONAL CFO/COO

FASTMARKETS /
EUROMONEY INSTITUTIONAL
INVESTOR



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INSIGHTS ...

BEN FLETCHER

PRINCIPAL ENGINEER
FINANCIAL TIMES



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE



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ENGLISH SUBTITLES



INSIGHTS ...

RICHARD WEINBAUM

DESIGN ENGINEER,
ASSYTEM, BE AEROSPACE



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE



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ENGLISH SUBTITLES

INSIGHTS ...

MAEVE DERMODY

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT



IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE



EMBEDDED VIDEO



ENGLISH SUBTITLES



SHOWCASING ...

JOANNE CHESTER

TEDx



IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE



VOICEOVER IN ENGLISH



EMBEDDED VIDEO

TALK TO THE HAND

interpreter-mediated workplace settings

PROFILING JOANNE CHESTER



Joanne is Deaf and an Irish Sign Language user. She is a Community Worker and Youth Worker with a passion for social justice. She featured in the “London Calling” documentary which was aired last May on RTE. In the light of the documentary, she campaigns for Access to Work in Ireland and for Deaf people to be included as equal citizens. She says “There are many potential rising stars from the Deaf community who yearn to strive in society but they face barriers daily due to inadequate access and deep-rooted prejudices. With a shift in attitude, we can create a better society for us all”. Joanne is Deaf and an Irish Sign Language user. She is a Community Worker and Youth Worker with a passion for social justice. She featured in the “London Calling” documentary which was aired last May on RTE. In the light of the documentary, she is currently campaigning for Access to Work in Ireland and for Deaf people to be included as equal citizens. She says “There are many potential rising stars from the Deaf community who yearn to strive in society but they face barriers daily due to inadequate access and deep-rooted prejudices. With a shift in attitude, we can create a better society for us all.” This talk was given at a TEDx event using the TED conference format but independently organized by a local community.

CHANGE THE WORLD WITH US

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Consider employing a deaf sign language user

Deaf people are **flexible**. They spend every day adapting the way they interact with the world as best as they can which demonstrates their sense of determination

Hiring a deaf person can lead to **better communication within your organisation**. Staff working with a deaf person will learn alternative ways of communicating, for example, they may learn to hone their turn-taking skills, and improve their communication and non-verbal communication skills!

The DESIGNS project research has found that deaf people are **loyal to the company**. They are more likely to continue working for an organisation making them **reliable**.

A more **organised and structured** workplace. Adjustments such as arranging an interpreter for a meeting enhances focus and purpose; it also fosters **better time management**.

Deaf people face more challenges than those who are not deaf and therefore have to employ **creative thinking** and **problem solving** skills to find solutions.

A potential way to **attract new customers** to your business. A deaf employee may be able to propose **new ideas** to make your business accessible to the Deaf community therefore **increasing company revenue**.

Deaf employees can be an excellent addition to your company to promote and **showcase a diverse workforce** and will have a positive impact on not just the culture of the organisation, but also with the public.

So why would you not employ a deaf person?

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Are my application processes user-friendly and accessible for deaf applicants ?

1

Does your organisation's video promotional material have subtitles?

2

Do you offer multiple and accessible means of contacting the company to enquire about the role?

3

Are you encouraging disclosure from deaf applicants at the application stage?

4

Is there a designated contact the deaf applicant can contact if they wish to request supports such as a sign language interpreter for the recruitment process?

5

What statement or evidence does your company have that showcases it is willing to accept applications from a diverse pool of candidates, including deaf people?

Is my job specification and job description accurate?

1

Job descriptions should describe the job and not the individual who will fill the job! Think about actual day-to-day functions of the job.

2

What are the core and essential functions of the job and absolutely cannot be changed?

3

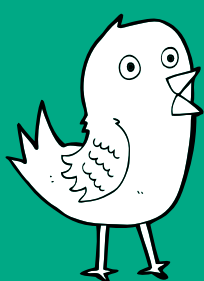
What aspects of the job can be modified or distributed?

4

Is there a way to approach aspects of the job differently?

5

Can certain elements of the job be carried out with assistive technology or with the support of a sign language interpreter?



Is a telephone really necessary? What are the alternatives?

1

You can use a text-relay service

2

You can use Skype or instant messaging for interviews

Use a video relay service where the interpreter is present by video for the deaf interviewee.

4

Meet the candidate with an interpreter face to face or through video

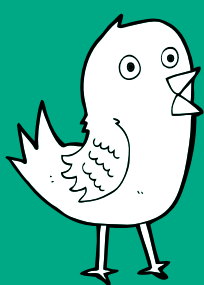
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REMEMBER THE CLICHÉ

think outside of the box



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Is psychometric testing and technical tests a good idea?

Psychometric testing presents a range of barriers for people with disabilities and for deaf people in particular, two of these barriers are to do with language and time restrictions.

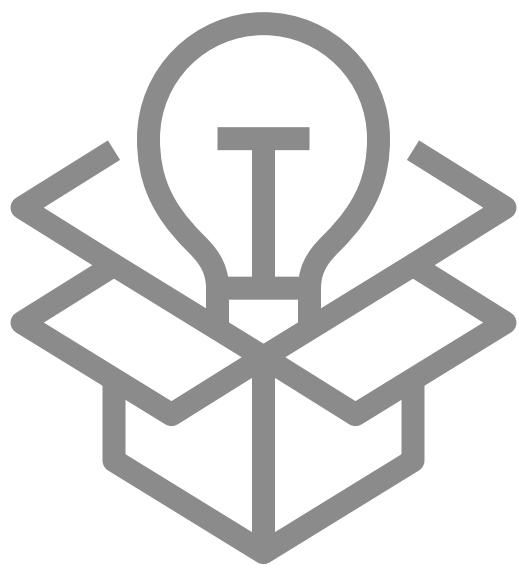
In order for them to process information by reading, they mentally translate the written or spoken language information into sign language

They have to prepare to construct or select their answer carefully ensuring that they do not make a mistake that could hinder their chances for progressing to the next stage.

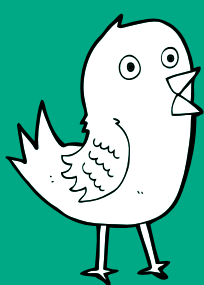
The same barriers can also apply to technical and written tests which often included in assessment protocols. Allow extra time for the tests to be completed. Time and a half is generally a good rule to go by.

Will a sign language interpreter be required for the testing if it's being carried out in an assessment centre?
Ensure audio or video files contained in the testing, are these accessible?

Waive the psychometric test and conduct an alternative recruitment process.



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Oh what about group assessments?

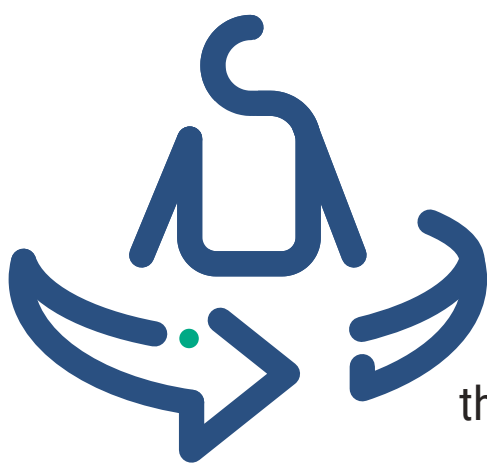
Usually a deaf applicant will require an interpreter for group assessments, particularly if they are the only deaf candidate in the group. An interviewer in a group assessment must be aware that a sign language interpreter has to wait a few seconds after someone has spoken/signed before they can begin to interpret. This leads to an inevitable delay (which is normal when interpreting simultaneously), but which means that a deaf candidate must be given time to see the interpretation of the questions that are asked, and then given time to respond.

IT'S OK TO LAG BEHIND



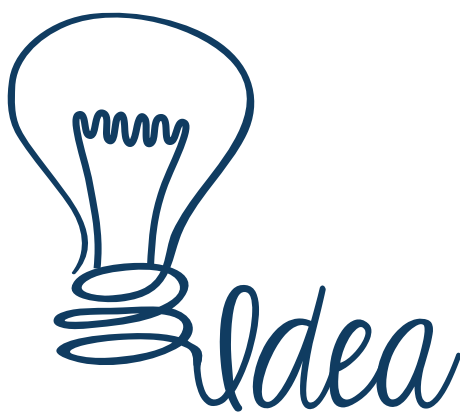
A group assessment is often fast-paced with numerous people speaking over one another which can make it difficult for a deaf person to interject and contribute due to the lag time of interpreting.

IT'S YOUR TURN



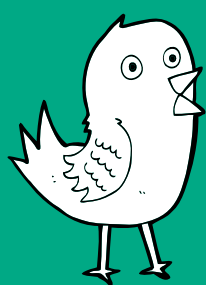
Before you start, set some ground-rules around turn-taking to ensure that the deaf person is not left out. This exercise also gives you an insight into how candidates respond to instruction, how collaborative they are, and how they are inclined to operate in a team!

TRY AN ALTERNATIVE



Consider an alternative recruitment process for the deaf candidate such as an extended interview or demonstration which allows them to showcase the skills being assessed in the group assessment.

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PREPARING TO INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER EXPERIENCE

If the interviewer has no prior experience working in sign language interpreted interviews, ask the interpreter to provide a brief around interpreting and inter-cultural awareness.

ROOM LAYOUT

The interpreter may suggest changes to the layout of the room to ensure that all parties are visible to one another. Usually it's best practice for the interpreter to sit beside the interviewers.

PREPARATORY INFORMATION

Provide the interpreter with the names and roles of all of the people in attendance and any relevant documentation which will help the interpreter to prepare for the interview. This also helps the interpreter to appropriately reference speakers when they work.

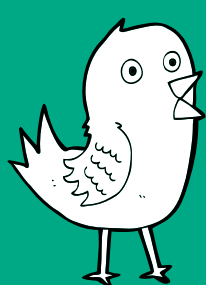
JARGON & TERMINOLOGY

Brief the interpreter about any technical terminology or special procedure/s that will arise during the interview. (For example, download the glossary of terms used in employment from the DESIGNS project website)

GIVE THE INTERPRETER A CHANCE TO CLARIFY

The interpreter may need to intervene during the interview to ask for clarification as they may not understand the terminology or abbreviations that are being used. Ensure that this clarification does not influence your evaluation of the deaf candidate.

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INSIGHTS ...

NIALL O'HANLON

ACCESS OFFICER

GROUP HR | ESB

CORPORATE CENTRE



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INSIGHTS ...

ANDREW BLAIR

HR MANAGER



ENGLISH



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ENGLISH SUBTITLES

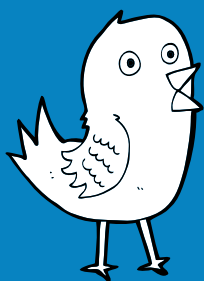
If you have hired a deaf person, you may need to put in place some adjustments (accommodations) in order for them to carry out their job as effectively as everyone else. In most countries, reasonable accommodations are required by law in order to prevent discrimination and to ensure equality.

When it comes accommodating a deaf employee, it is important to understand the impact of their deafness versus the job of which they have been recruited for. A key part in identifying the appropriate support/s required is to conduct a collaborative assessment of need with the deaf employee before they start in their new job.

Take into account all aspects of the job and work environment. For example:

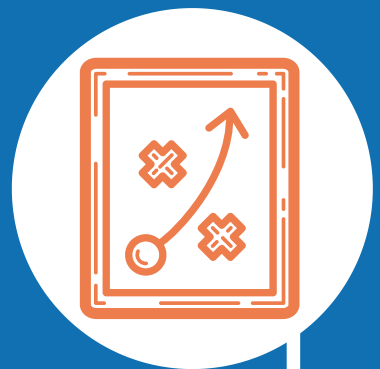
- Core tasks of the job (e.g. emails, research, report writing, etc.)
- Style of work (e.g. team, individual)
- Other activities such as training, meetings etc.
- Physical work space (e.g. open plan, own office etc.)• Health and safety (e.g. fire evacuation plan, accreditation etc.)

As an employer, by doing this you will be able to identify areas of where there is a need for a particular type of support.



PARTICIPATION
CHIEVING
AND
CLUSI
WORKPLACES
N

PLAN



1



COMMUNICATION

2



COMMON
SUPPORTS

3



MEETINGS

4

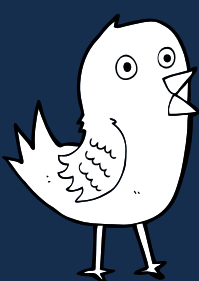


SOCIAL
INTEGRATION



HAPPY
WORKFORCE

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COMMUNICATION

The most common concern employers have is around communication between colleagues in the office on a daily basis as it may not be possible to provide a sign language interpreter every day.



Have a discussion with the deaf employee about this; ask them what they think would be the best method of communication for these daily interactions.



This can involve thinking about communication in a different way, for example, using written instructions via e-mail in place of verbal instructions.



Employers should also think of the different communication situations that the employee will be in.

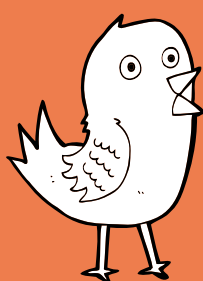


Remember, deaf people have lived their lives communicating with people who do not sign every day, so they will know what works best for them!



And also remember that communication doesn't just happen in formal work-related communication: social networking time at work is also an important part of work culture. So think about how you can ensure that any deaf employees are included in social gatherings (either with or without an interpreter).

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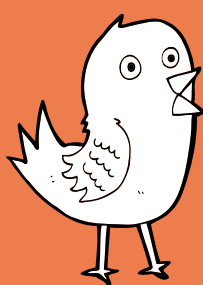
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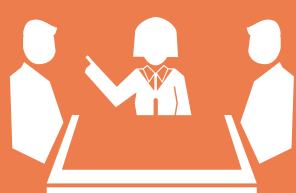
COMMON SUPPORTS

- Book an interpreter for team meetings or important meetings with the manager
- Review the physical layout of the office – e.g. consider how desks are arranged
- Use email or instant messaging for communication
- Provide proof-reading where necessary
- Allow extra time for reading documents
- A portable loop system if they wear hearing aids or cochlear implant
- Explore the range of assistive listening devices available
- Deliver deaf awareness training to staff members
- Have a personal emergency evacuation plan in place
- Install visual alarms
- Ensure that all media material is accessible for a deaf employee
- Provide time off for audiology appointments
- Provide alternative contact details for sick leave requests

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MEETINGS



Deaf people draw on a range of ways of communicating at large meetings or conferences: some deaf people require an interpreter and others use technologies like a loop system that amplifies sound from within the 'loop', and delivers it to their hearing aid; or a SpeedText system, which transcribes speech to text.



At the beginning of a meeting, ask the deaf person where they would like to sit, as they will need to be able to see everyone at the meeting, including the interpreter, if one is provided. Also consider the layout of the room, lighting and background noise levels.



Following an agenda will provide context to a conversation for the deaf employee.



If you want to interject at a meeting, raise your hand to avoid overlapping speech. This will give the deaf person a visual signal as to who is speaking at a given time. Also, interpreters can only interpret for one speaker or signer at a time so overlapping speech/sign means interpreters have to choose who to follow.

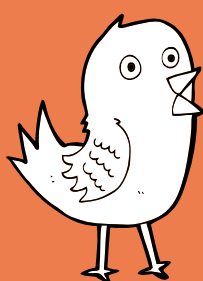


Don't talk with your back to the audience, for example if writing on a board, flip chart etc.



The deaf employee may find it helpful to sit beside the note-taker at meetings or have a colleague share notes. This, along with a post-meeting debriefing will ensure that they get the most out of every meeting.

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SOCIAL INTEGRATION

In the workplace, the actual work is only one aspect of an employee's career. There is an expectation that all employees integrate and participate in the activities of the wider workplace and take part in social aspects of office life. One of main things that has been reported through our research is the lack of social interaction with other colleagues.

To make your workplace more inclusive and accessible for deaf employee/s, try some of the following:



Encourage team members to include the deaf person by using the notepad feature on a tablet or phone to communicate or even use old fashioned technology - a pen and paper!



Group conversations can be difficult for deaf people to follow - adopt good turn-taking practices and maintain eye contact. Face the deaf person. These tips will make it easier for the deaf employee to lip-read if this is something that they do.



Do not cut the conversation short by saying something like "Don't worry, it doesn't matter" or "I will tell you later". Such comments are demotivating, and set the scene for effectively excluding a deaf colleague.

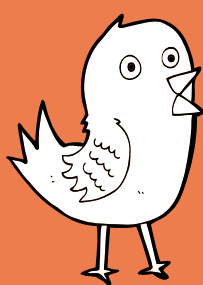


Consider running a sign language course within your company. This will send a positive message to the deaf employee who will feel they are being included.



Have a deaf awareness session with staff in your company and include the deaf person to participate in the discussion which could include practical tips around how to approach deaf people, busting myths around what it is like to be a deaf person, and exploring aspects of Deaf culture (could be a lunchtime session

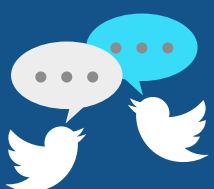
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Disclosure is a complicated term which means different things to different people, Here, we refer to disclosure as informing you, (as the employer), during the recruitment process, that that the applicant is deaf.

The information in this session is what we consider the critical aspects that a deaf candidate might consider when they apply for a job.



TO DISCLOSE OR NOT TO DISCLOSE

1

The decision to disclose is usually made by weighing up personal factors such as self-identity, lived experience and attitudes; environmental factors such as workplace culture and staff within the organisation; and systematic factors such as employment equality legalisation, policies and what supports or funding assistance is available.

2

Disclosure is not as simple as just informing someone you are deaf. You, as the deaf person, may need to provide more information to the employer depending on what part of the recruitment stage you are at.

3

WHY – why would you disclose? Maybe you need to disclose because you require a sign language interpreter at the interview. Maybe you will need an alternative interview format if initial interviews are carried out over the phone. Maybe you require extra time for written aptitude tests as sign language is your first language.

4

WHAT – what would you disclose? Depending on your answer to the WHY, it will shape what you are going to be asking for. You may need to give more information if you are requesting a reasonable adjustment. However, only disclose relevant and useful information. For example; I am deaf, therefore a sign language interpreter will be required for the interview process.

5

WHEN – when do you disclose? Depending on what stage of process you are at and what your answers to the above are, you should know when. If you need an interpreter for the interview, usually you should disclose to the employer when you confirm your attendance for the interview.



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6

WHO – who do you disclose to? For the recruitment process, disclosure is usually given to the person who is contacting you for interview. In some cases, companies may have a dedicated access or disability officer who will be responsible for arranging supports during the recruitment process.

7

HOW – how do I disclose? For recruitment processes, it's always best to disclose through writing especially if you are requesting a specific support so there is clarity on both sides.

8

Remember that some employers may have never interviewed someone who is deaf before or worked with a sign language interpreter. They may not be aware of their obligations, how to book an interpreter or whether there is any funding available for this. You may have to guide the employer through the process.

9

Empower yourself with knowing your rights, relevant policies, funding assistance and what supports are available including keeping up to date with the latest advances in technology.

10

Disclosure is a personal choice and you should be aware of the consequences of whether you do or don't disclose.

Some advice from AHEAD - Association for Higher Education Access & Disability



DESIGNS PROJECT COORDINATOR

IGI Publishing is the publishing arm of Interesource Group (Ireland) Limited which is an Irish company specialising in educational training, creative media & design and HR & business consulting.

Since 1999, the company has been involved in creating innovative education and training solutions co-funded by the European Commission. It has coordinated 12 international projects and has been a partner in 5 projects across 21 countries.

Interesource Group has managed projects in a variety of educational, economic and social domains including: tourism & hospitality, disability & social inclusion, healthcare risk management and language & cultural communication in international trade. The company has specialised and has led projects focussing on equality and access for deaf communities to employment; healthcare; education, and justice.

Some of the projects have been awarded accolades such as the European Language Label for the JUSTISIGNS, MEDISIGNS, SIGNALL and EUROSIGNS 2, projects. The MORPH project was selected as one of the top 32 best practice projects in Europe and FOSTER was reported in the Business and Disability initiative in Ireland. In 2010, SIGNALL II was featured in the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion campaign.

Interesource Group is the coordinator of the DESIGNS project

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