

# Working with a Lipspeaker

## Users

Both deaf and hearing people use Lipspeakers to aid communication between them. Below are some useful points to remember when working with a Lipspeaker

## Role of Lipspeakers

A Lipspeaker conveys a speaker's message to lipreaders accurately using unvoiced speech. This requires the Lipspeaker to produce the shapes of words with exceptional clarity. The Lipspeaker also reproduces the rhythm and phrasing of speech as used by the speaker, and supports the message with facial expressions and natural gesture. It should be noted that natural gesture is defined as a manual indicator that would be readily understood by a deaf person with no knowledge of BSL. If the lipreader requests it, fingerspelling will also be used. The Lipspeaker should negotiate the individual requirements of the lipreader at the start of the assignment.

The Lipspeaker will not act on behalf of the lipreader. Any questions or comments should be directed at the lipreader, and not through the Lipspeaker.

## Levels of Lipspeaking

It is very important to book the correct level of Lipspeaker for an assignment, to ensure the lipreader obtains the best service possible. The following is intended to help decide which level is appropriate for a particular assignment.

**Level 3 Lipspeakers** are qualified to deal with all types of assignment, and in particular should be booked for higher education assignments, meetings or training courses in the workplace, or conferences where the language is technical and speech speeds are likely to be high. Some messages are too fast to be conveyed verbatim, as fast speech speeds become unlipreadable, and in this case, in negotiation with the lipreader, the Level 3 Lipspeaker will "pare down the message". This means removing redundancies of speech to bring the message down to a lipreadable speed. The Lipspeaker will not change the meaning or intent of the speaker's message.

At times, a lipreader may wish to use a combination of listening and looking and will ask the Lipspeaker to use their voice to pass on the speaker's message. This is not always possible, but in certain contexts it can be negotiated, and a Level 3 Lipspeaker is trained to work in this way, and will be able to assist the speaker to deliver their message in a way that will help the process to proceed smoothly.

Some deaf people require their messages to be relayed to a hearing person, and the Level 3 Lipspeaker may be able to do this, or if this is not possible, to work with the deaf person to use strategies to assist communication.

Only Level 3 Lipspeakers should be booked for assignments in the legal domain, including police and solicitors' meetings and Magistrates' and Crown Courts, and in Social Services and mental health contexts.

**Level 2 Lipspeakers** are not trained to "pare down" the message, so they should be booked for assignments where the participants are aware of the requirements of deaf people and are willing to make consistent accommodation for the lipreading process. Level 2 Lipspeakers

should be booked for meetings which are organised by or for deaf or deafened people, and where permission is given for the Lipspeaker to interrupt proceedings if necessary. Examples of such meetings are routine one-to-one consultations with GPs or Benefits Agencies, meetings and AGMs of charities such as Hearing Concern or NADP, further education contexts where the subject is familiar to the Lipspeaker, and open meetings that have been set up to give information to deaf people.

Level 2 Lipspeakers are aware of the possible consequences for the lipreader and their hearing colleagues if the message is not passed on appropriately, and they should refuse to accept assignments where they are aware they do not have sufficient qualifications, skills, experience or competence. Level 2 Lipspeakers should never be booked for assignments in the legal domain, including police work, for assignments concerning mental health or social services contexts, or for assignments in the workplace or higher education.

Registered Level 3 and Level 2 Lipspeakers have agreed to abide by the CACDP Lipspeakers' Codes of Ethics and Practice, and are bound by the CACDP Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures. They are obliged to maintain confidentiality and impartiality, and will not disclose any information to a third party.

### **Lipspeaking Process**

The Lipspeaker should arrange to meet the lipreader 15 minutes before the assignment begins. This will allow the lipreader to give instructions and to familiarise themselves with the Lipspeaker's speech patterns. It also allows seating and lighting arrangements to be checked. Lipspeaking requires the Lipspeaker to listen to what is said and repeat it accurately, normally without using voice, **whilst listening to the next sentence**. To do this the Lipspeaker has to hear clearly. It may be impossible to convey softly spoken or mumbled messages. Noisy surroundings will have the same effect. If several people speak at once, it will not be possible to pass on any message.

If material is distributed, or an overhead projector is being used, or notes are being taken please remember that the lipreader cannot watch the Lipspeaker and read or write at the same time. A short pause will allow the lipreader to look at the material before returning to the Lipspeaker.

Hearing people need to speak in a clear voice and at a moderate pace. The Chair of a meeting, or lecturer, should be conscious of the needs of those who lipread, and of those who lipspeak. They should check with the lipreader on such matters as pace, volume and environment, and who may need to interrupt if adjustment or clarification is required.

The Lipspeaker is a sentence behind the speaker and the lipreader a sentence behind that. It is therefore important that there should be a pause after each speaker.

### **Position of the Lipspeaker**

Lipspeakers always have to consider seating arrangements in terms of lighting and background:

- There should be plenty of light on the Lipspeaker. Lipspeakers should not be placed in front of a window or with light coming from behind as this darkens the face and prevents lipreading.
- The background behind the Lipspeaker should be plain. A vividly patterned wallpaper, mirror or harsh white background is tiring for a lipreader and will affect their ability to concentrate on the message.

The ideal position for the Lipspeaker will depend upon the type of assignment. For example, in a job interview it is helpful if the interviewer and the applicant face one another with the Lipspeaker next to the hearing person or to one side. In a round table meeting the Lipspeaker should be positioned opposite any deaf participants. At a conference, with a deaf presenter who lipreads, the Lipspeaker will need to be placed opposite the deaf person, often in the front row of the audience, or nearer, in order to lip speak clearly. For a hearing presenter, the Lipspeaker is better placed as close as possible to the presenter and near to any visual aids so that the deaf people can refer to both quickly and easily. If a BSL/English interpreter is also present, the Lipspeaker needs to be positioned in such a way as to prevent distraction to each others' clients.

## Communicating Visually

It will help the process if the speaker remembers the following points:

- It is important to look directly at the deaf person even though he/she will be watching the Lipspeaker
- Always speak and refer to the deaf person directly. For example, it is not appropriate for a doctor to ask the Lipspeaker "How is she today?" - "How are you today?" should be used. If the deaf person replies "I have stomach pains" the Lipspeaker will repeat her words exactly.
- Do not ask the Lipspeaker questions or make comments to the Lipspeaker.
- Allow time for deaf people to look at visual material (eg slides, overhead projector slides, papers) before referring to it.
- Allow time for deaf people to take notes if they wish before the discussion continues.
- Remember the deaf person is lipreading the sentence before the one currently being spoken. It is important to allow them the opportunity to contribute to the discussion by leaving a pause so that they can ask questions or give information if necessary.

Following a meeting, conference, consultation etc through a Lipspeaker can be very tiring. Whereas hearing people can rest their eyes and still hear what is being said, if a deaf person ceases to watch the Lipspeaker, vital information may be missed. Deaf people, therefore, will often appreciate it if breaks can be built in to long or intense programmes.

## How to book a Lipspeaker

Bearing in mind the shortage of Lipspeakers available, it is important to book Lipspeakers several weeks in advance whenever possible.

It is essential to book an LSP who is **suitably qualified for the assignment** or the deaf person will not receive appropriate access. It is important to consult the deaf person to ask what kind of communication service they require before booking an LSP.

To ensure the standard of the communication service, it may be necessary to book 2 Lipspeakers for certain assignments. If an assignment is to last in excess of 3 hours this will normally be appropriate.

## Checklist

When booking a Lipspeaker the following initial information should be provided:

- Type of assignment (job interview, conference, meeting etc) and subject matter
- Date, time and length of assignment

- Location of assignment
- Names of other Lipspeakers and team members

This will allow the Lipspeaker to decide whether he/she is available and capable of undertaking the assignment. Then he/she will wish to discuss:

- How many people are involved and who they are
- Requirements of the deaf/hearing people involved
- Fees and travel expenses (accommodation if applicable)
- Address of assignment and name of contact person on site:
- Telephone contact details
- A programme for the event (if applicable) and what will take place (eg lectures, workshops, will a video or slides be shown?, will the event be video recorded? .)

The Lipspeaker's permission should be sought before audio or video recording any assignment.

### **Confirmation**

The booking should be confirmed in writing, whenever possible, outlining the relevant details discussed and agreed together with details of where and to whom invoices should be sent.

### **Preparation**

Any papers relevant to an assignment should be sent to Lipspeakers well in advance. This will allow them to search for specialist vocabulary and to familiarise themselves with the subject and the people involved before an assignment. For example:

- Minutes and agenda
- Copies or summaries of speeches and lectures
- Programme of the event
- Any background information relating to the topic, the people involved, the organisation responsible for the event etc
- A location map

All such information will be kept confidential by the Lipspeaker and returned or destroyed after the assignment has been completed.

### **Use of the CACDP Kitemark**

Some registered Lipspeakers may use the CACDP kitemark in their publicity material. This kitemark is shown below.

