

Working with a Lipspeaker

Role of the Lipspeaker

A lipspeaker conveys a speaker's message to lipreaders accurately using unvoiced speech. This requires the lipspeaker to produce the shapes of words clearly. The lipspeaker also reproduces the rhythm and phrasing used by the speaker, and supports the message with facial expressions and natural gesture. If the lipreader requests it, fingerspelling will also be used.

Levels of Lipspeaking

Level 3 Lipspeakers are qualified to deal with all types of assignments, 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. Only Level 3 Lipspeakers should be booked for assignments in legal settings, including police and solicitors' meetings, magistrates' and crown courts, and in social services and mental health contexts.

Level 2 Lipspeakers should be booked for meetings such as 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 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.

How to book a Lipspeaker

It is important to book lipspeakers several weeks in advance wherever possible, or to be prepared to be flexible about dates and times. Lipspeakers can be found by searching the registers on the NRCPD website www.nrcpd.org.uk.

Before the meeting

- Inform the lipspeaker of the type of assignment and details of the date, time, length and location
- Make sure that the lipspeaker has a contact name and telephone number
- Ensure that the lipspeaker receives copies of the agenda and any other relevant papers at least a week before the date so they can prepare for the assignment
- 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

Position of the Lipspeaker

- 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
- The background behind the lipspeaker should be visually clear and calm. A vividly patterned wallpaper can be distracting or straining on the eye
- The ideal position for the lipspeaker will also depend on the type of assignment.
 - In a job interview it is helpful if the interviewer and the applicant face one another with the lipspeaker next to the hearing person
 - In a round table meeting the lipspeaker should be positioned opposite any deaf participants
 - At a conference the lipspeaker is better placed as close as possible to the presenter and near to any visual aids so that the deaf people in the audience can view both quickly and easily

During the meeting

- Allow time for deaf people to look at visual material (e.g. slides, handouts). They can't watch the lipspeaker and read materials at the same time
- Speakers must speak in a clear voice and at a moderate pace
- Meetings should be disciplined so only one person speaks at a time
- The lipspeaker should have frequent breaks during the day. If this cannot be done two lipspeakers should be booked. The deaf person will also appreciate breaks as watching a lipspeaker for a long period of time can be very tiring