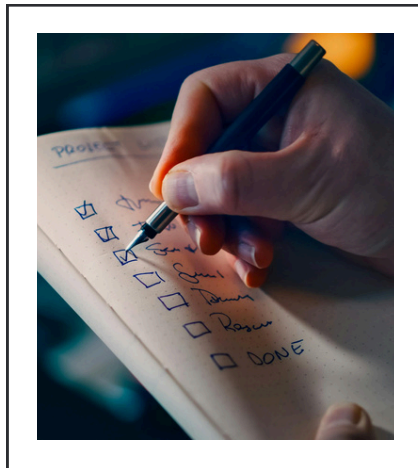




# INCLUSIVE MEETING CHECKLIST

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS  
AND MANAGERS SUPPORTING DEAF  
COLLEAGUES**

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BY DEAF UMBRELLA LTD.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Meetings are where decisions are made, ideas are shared and teams work together.

Meetings should be a place where everyone can contribute. Yet for many Deaf employees, they can become a source of frustration when accessibility is overlooked.

The good news is that creating more inclusive meetings doesn't have to be complicated or expensive.

This checklist will help you build better meeting habits that benefit Deaf colleagues and improve communication for everyone.





# CHAPTER I

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## WHY INCLUSIVE MEETINGS MATTER

Inclusive meetings don't happen by chance.

They happen because someone has taken the time to think about how everyone will access the conversation.

For Deaf employees, communication barriers often appear in everyday situations rather than extraordinary ones.

A fast-paced discussion.

People interrupting each other.

A presenter speaking while looking at their screen.

An agenda that wasn't shared beforehand.

None of these things are usually intentional. Yet each one can make it harder to follow the conversation, contribute ideas or fully participate.

When these barriers happen repeatedly, people can begin to feel disconnected from their team, less confident speaking up and excluded from important discussions.

That's why accessibility should be considered before every meeting — not as an afterthought, but as part of good planning.

# CHAPTER II

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## THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE MEETINGS

Creating accessible meetings improves the experience for everyone in the room.

### **Better communication**

Clear meeting structures, agendas and turn-taking help everyone understand the conversation and stay focused.

### **Higher engagement**

When people can fully participate, they're more likely to share ideas, ask questions and contribute confidently.

### **Fewer misunderstandings**

Accessible communication reduces confusion, missed information and the need to revisit decisions later.

### **Improved productivity**

Well-planned meetings are often shorter, more focused and lead to clearer actions and better outcomes.

### **Stronger team culture**

When people feel heard, respected and included, trust grows. Inclusive meetings help create a workplace where everyone has the opportunity to do their best work.

Remember:

**Inclusive meetings aren't about doing more.  
They're about communicating better.**



Small, consistent changes can remove barriers, strengthen collaboration and create a workplace where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

# CHAPTER III

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## BEFORE THE MEETING

***Great meetings start before anyone joins the call.***

A few minutes of preparation can remove communication barriers before they even have the chance to appear. It also gives everyone the opportunity to arrive informed, confident and ready to contribute.

**Before you send the invitation, ask yourself:**

► **Have I asked whether anyone needs communication support or reasonable adjustments?**

Don't make assumptions. Every Deaf person communicates differently. A quick conversation beforehand helps ensure the right support is in place.

► **Have I booked any required communication support?**

If a BSL interpreter, speech-to-text reporter or other communication professional is needed, book them as early as possible. Availability can be limited, especially for larger meetings.

► **Have I shared the agenda in advance?**

An agenda isn't just good organisation; it helps everyone prepare, understand the purpose of the meeting and anticipate any technical language or complex discussions.

► **Have I sent presentations or documents beforehand?**

Giving people time to review information in advance means they can focus on the discussion instead of trying to read and listen at the same time.

► **Have I checked that everyone has the meeting link, joining instructions and accessibility information?**

A smooth start sets the tone. Avoid last-minute confusion by making sure everyone knows how and where to join.

# CHAPTER IV

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## DURING THE MEETING

While the meeting is taking place, remember to:

► **Introduce everyone at the start, especially if people haven't met before.**

Knowing who's in the room helps everyone follow the conversation and understand who's speaking.

► **Keep to one speaker at a time.**

Interruptions and people talking over one another are one of the biggest barriers to accessible communication. Give each person the space to finish before someone else begins.

► **Face the room (or the camera) when you're speaking.**

Looking away while talking makes lipreading difficult and can reduce the accuracy of captions. Also, avoid covering your face with your hands, a notebook or a microphone. Even small movements can make a difference.

► **Speak clearly and naturally.**

There's no need to shout or over-enunciate. Clear, steady communication is far more effective.

► **Keep your camera on during online meetings where possible.**

Being able to see facial expressions and lip movements provides valuable communication cues.

► **Pause before the next person speaks.**

A brief pause gives interpreters, captioners and everyone else a chance to keep up with the conversation.

► **Describe what's on screen.**

Instead of saying, "*As you can see here...*", explain what you're referring to. This helps everyone follow the discussion, particularly when diagrams, charts or complex visuals are being used.

► **Create space for everyone to contribute.**

Some people need a little longer to process information before responding. Give everyone the opportunity to ask questions or share their thoughts before moving on.

# CHAPTER V

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## AFTER THE MEETING

### **Inclusion doesn't end when the meeting finishes.**

The conversation may be over, but good communication continues afterwards.

Following up properly helps everyone leave with the same understanding of what was discussed and what happens next.

### **Before you move on to your next task:**

#### **► Send meeting notes as soon as possible.**

A written summary helps confirm key discussions, decisions and agreed actions.

#### **► Highlight actions, responsibilities and deadlines clearly.**

Avoid leaving people wondering who is doing what. Clear actions reduce misunderstandings and improve accountability.

#### **► Share accessible copies of presentations and resources.**

Give everyone the opportunity to revisit the information at their own pace.

#### **► If the meeting was recorded, check captions before sharing it.**

Captions should support understanding, not create another barrier through inaccuracies.

#### **► Ask one simple question:**

*"Is there anything we could do differently next time to make this meeting more accessible?"*

Some of the best improvements come from listening to the people attending your meetings.





# CHAPTER V

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## WHY SMALL CHANGES MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

It's easy to think of accessibility as something extra.  
In reality, it's simply good communication.

When meetings are planned with inclusion in mind, everyone benefits, not just Deaf colleagues.

People know what's expected.  
They can follow the conversation more easily.  
They feel confident contributing their ideas.  
And they leave knowing exactly what happens next.

The result?

- ✓ Clearer communication.
- ✓ Better engagement.
- ✓ Fewer misunderstandings.
- ✓ More productive meetings.
- ✓ Stronger teamwork.
- ✓ A workplace where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Inclusive meetings happen because someone took the time to plan.  
And that's what great leadership looks like.

# KEEP THIS CHECKLIST HANDY

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Before your next meeting, take two minutes to run through these points.

We recommend keeping a copy somewhere visible or adding it to your meeting planning process. The more consistently these small actions become part of everyday working life, the more inclusive your workplace becomes.

Small changes can make a lasting difference.

## Explore More Free Resources

Looking to create a more inclusive workplace?

Download our free employer guides for practical advice, expert insights and simple actions you can implement straight away.

- [Hiring Deaf Candidates: A Practical Guide for Employers](#)
- [Understanding Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace](#)
- [Access to Work \(AtW\) - Your essential guide](#)

## About Deaf Umbrella Ltd

We help employers create workplaces where Deaf employees can thrive through practical Deaf Awareness Training, workplace consultancy and Access to Work support.

Need advice?

Get in touch; we're always happy to help.

