

HOW TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

**A GUIDE TO EQUAL ACCESS FOR
DEAF PEOPLE**

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INTRODUCTION

If you're Deaf, you have the right to access your job or education on equal terms as everyone else.

That means your employer or college must make "reasonable adjustments" to remove barriers. But knowing what to ask for and how to ask can feel difficult – especially when English isn't your first language.

We want to help you feel confident when finding out your needs, asking for what works, and standing up for your rights.

It's designed to be used by Communication Support Workers (CSWs) working with Deaf people.

Important Notes for BSL Users

- ➡ Each main section includes 🖐️ **BSL Tips** – these highlight important things that are often misunderstood or unclear in English. You can take them to a BSL interpreter to help you understand or explain your request in BSL.
- ➡ Plain English is used throughout to help Deaf BSL users who may find written English difficult.

CHAPTER I

EQUAL ACCESS: YOUR RIGHTS

In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 says that employers, schools, and colleges must make reasonable adjustments if you are disabled.

You are protected if:

- You are Deaf
- Your disability makes it harder for you to do things others do easily

Employers and education providers must make **reasonable adjustments** — practical changes that remove or reduce barriers for you. This might include:

- A British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter
- Captions in meetings or videos
- Extra time in assessments
- Clear instructions in writing

💡 You don't have to "prove" you are Deaf to get support, but in some cases, a doctor's note may help.

BSL Tip:

- "Reasonable adjustments" = "help you ask for, to do your job/study better."
- Equality Act = law that says they *must* help, not *maybe* help.



CHAPTER II

WHAT DO YOU NEED? FINDING OUT BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS

Sometimes we are told to just try harder. But if you're Deaf, it's not about you being the problem – it's about the environment needing to change.

Ask yourself:

When do I struggle?

- Do I miss things in spoken meetings?
- Is the environment too noisy?
- Do I get left out of group discussions?


When do I do well?

- Do I understand better when people use BSL?
- Is it easier when I get notes after meetings?
- Do captions or written instructions help?

When you compare the two, you'll start to see:

- 👉 What's not working (barriers)
- 👉 What helps you succeed (solutions)

Talking these through with a CSW or trusted colleague can help you decide what adjustments you need.

 **BSL Tip:** "Barrier" = problem in place, not your body.



CHAPTER III

TYPES OF CHANGES THAT MAY HELP

There is no one-size-fits-all answer.
Ask for what works for you.

Here are common adjustments for
Deaf people:

Communication Support

- BSL interpreter for meetings, training, or interviews
- Speech-to-text notetakers or palantypists
- Live captions or subtitles on videos
- Written instructions for tasks
- Text or Email instead of phone calls


Technology

- Flashing light alert systems
- Textphone or relay service
- Captions or voice-to-text apps
- Soundfield systems in classrooms
- Video Relay Service (VRS) for meetings

Environment

- Quieter workspace
- Good lighting for lipreading or sign
- Permission to move seats for better view
- Reduced background noise where possible

If you already know what works for you – that's your best guide. Don't wait for someone else to suggest it.

 **BSL Tip:** “Adjustment” = support, not change-yourself.



CHAPTER IV

HOW TO ASK FOR A CHANGE (ACCOMMODATION)

You do not need to use fancy words. A simple request is enough.

Example:

- “I need a BSL interpreter to take part in meetings.”
- “Please use captions during video calls. I rely on them to follow the discussion.”
- “Can instructions be given to me in writing?”
- “I’m Deaf and need to work in a quieter part of the office to focus.”

Tips:

- Put it in writing if you can (email or message - it’s proof)
- Be clear about what you need and why
- Don’t apologise. You’re not asking for special treatment – just equal access.
- Avoid putting yourself down (say what helps, not what you “can’t” do)
- Ask someone you trust – your manager, tutor, or HR

You are simply asking for the tools you need to succeed — and that is your right.

 **BSL Tip:** “Reasonable” = possible, fair, not too hard for employer.

CHAPTER V


THE WORKING TOGETHER PROCESS: HOW IT WORKS

This means talking with your employer or school about your request. It's a two-way conversation.

Be ready:

- Know your needs and why they help
- Be open to discussing options
- You can suggest what works best for you

If they offer something different, ask: "Will this work as well for me?" You don't have to accept something that doesn't help you.

 **BSL Tip:** "Working together process" = two-way conversation, not just you asking.

WHAT IF THEY SAY NO?

If your request is refused:

1. Ask why – is it cost? misunderstanding?
2. Try to negotiate – suggest something else that's still effective
3. Remind them this is a request for a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act
4. Get support – a union rep, your CSW, Access to Work adviser, or advocate can help
5. You can raise a grievance or complaint if the problem continues

CHAPTER VI


STAYING CONFIDENT AND LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Asking for help isn't always easy. But your needs are reasonable.

Tips to support yourself:

- Write things down before meetings
- Practise saying your request with a friend
- Bring a colleague or support worker with you
- Breathe deeply if you feel nervous
- Remember: you are not asking for a favour – you are asking for fair access

Emotions can come up – frustration, sadness, anxiety. That's okay. Be kind to yourself. Take breaks. Talk to someone who understands.

 **BSL Tip:** “Self-advocacy” = asking for your own needs.



CHAPTER VII

TEMPLATES YOU CAN USE

Change Request Email (1)

Subject: Request for Reasonable Adjustment

Hello [Manager's name],

I am Deaf and need [BSL interpreter / captions / etc.] to access [meetings / training / job tasks].

This helps me do my job properly and fully take part.

Thank you.

[Your Name]

Change Request Email (2)

Hello [Manager's name],

I am writing to request a reasonable adjustment. I have a disability that makes it harder to [e.g. follow spoken information in meetings].

Due to this, I am asking for [e.g. a BSL interpreter/live captions/written instructions]. This will allow me to fully participate and carry out my role effectively.

Is (company name) aware of Access to Work? I will happily explain the fund that covers the cost of support so you the employer do not have additional costs to work with me.

Thank you for your time and support.

Best regards,

Your name]

CONCLUSION

Asking for a change (accommodations) is your right. You don't need to be "less Deaf" or change who you are to succeed. Whether you use BSL, rely on captions, need written notes, or prefer quieter spaces – these are reasonable needs, not "special" requests.

You are not alone.

Deaf Umbrella can help you:

- **Find work:** We match Deaf jobseekers with employers who understand accessibility.
- **Set up Access to Work:** We guide you through the process, helping you apply for the grant and get the support you need to start or stay in your job.
- **Understand your rights:** We provide easy-to-understand resources, like our FREE eBook FAQ on Access to Work.

Download your free Access to Work FAQ eBook [here](#).

Find more free, thoughtful resources at 🌂 www.deafumbrella.com/freebies



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