**People Services: Service for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children**

**Video calls and meetings with Deaf or hearing impaired participants: good practice guide**

Many adults have issues with their hearing, which may not always be immediately evident. Some may wear hearing aids or use other technology to help with hearing; some may be relying heavily on lipreading; others may be British Sign Language users.

Video calls and meetings can be challenging and frustrating – the following are issues and strategies suggested by Deaf and hearing impaired colleagues.

Issues facing Deaf and hearing impaired participants and suggested strategies.

**Number of people**:

* the more people on a video call, the smaller the images. This makes lipreading hard. It is also difficult to quickly pick up who is speaking. It is very visually distracting to have a large number of people moving about (e.g. checking phones, getting up and down) If there is a BSL interpreter in the meeting, it is hard for the Deaf person to locate them.

Strategies to use

* + Good procedures for turn taking
  + Spotlighting the person talking
  + Muting everyone who is not talking
  + Minimise visual distractions – agree a code of conduct re staying seated, not moving around unnecessarily. It may be appropriate to ask participants not directly contributing to the meeting to turn their cameras off.
  + Using break-out rooms so there are a smaller number of participants

**Sound quality**

* The sound quality deteriorates with more people on a call. Background noise from participants is also a problem

Strategies to use

* + Mute all participants
  + Good procedures for turn taking
  + In Microsoft Teams there is a subtitling option – use but bear in mind it is not always 100% accurate

**Screen Sharing**

* Although this is very useful, it makes it difficult to find the BSL interpreter. Also if the Deaf/HI person is lipreading, they may not be able to see the person presenting.

Strategies to use

* + Pinning or spotlighting the person presenting and/or the interpreter
  + Stop the conversation or presentation while showing the screen, to give the Deaf/HI person time to read the information before starting to talk again

**Visual fatigue**

* It is very tiring to concentrate on a screen for lengths of time, a Deaf/HI participant will not be able to look away for fear of missing anything

Strategies to use (in addition to those above)

* + Regular short breaks, so the Deaf/HI person can shift their gaze and concentration
  + Suitable time agreed for the meeting – the end of the day may not be appropriate

**Using a BSL interpreter**

* Check that the agency is aware that it is a video meeting
* Give as much information as possible to the interpreter before the meeting – agenda, powerpoints, outline of discussions. This is particularly important if you are going to use technical vocabulary or jargon that they may need to learn in advance.
* At the beginning of the meeting make sure that the interpreter and the Deaf participant/s can see each other. The interpreter will need to be able to see the Deaf person so that they can voice over any of their signed contributions.
* As above, be careful when sharing documents.
* If using break-out groups, make sure the interpreter goes with the Deaf participant.

**NB each individual and situation is different, the best ‘good practice’ is to check with the Deaf or hearing impaired participants what will work best for them.**

For more information or advice, please contact the Service or your named Teacher of the Deaf:-

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