**Making Zoom Accessible for**

**Deaf British Sign Language Users**
Before the meeting starts, you will need to have considered the needs of Deaf people or those who are hard of hearing. With the vast number of people living with hearing loss, it is safe to assume that it is wise to have your “captioning” enabled before any remote meetings.

If your audience is limited, you may want to discuss their chosen option. There are various on-line meeting options, among them Teams, Zoom, google meet, and people often have preferences.

There are several useful measures and features that can assist those who are Deaf British Sign Language users to make remote meetings more accessible. Some features will vary and may depend on whether you are using a service that you have paid for. This document makes that assumption.

**Communication Support**Ensure any communication support requirements have been addressed. While captioning is available your audience may benefit or need a “live captioner”. This comes at a cost, but will ensure a more accurate translation.
Ensure that any background support materials are shared in advance
This is good practice, regardless of your audience, however, people with accessible needs will really need and benefit from having time to review previous discussions. This is especially important for BSL users, who may wish to query any complex English or jargon. This is particularly important now that, even, such matters as medical appointments, legal briefings and inquests may be held online.

**Be mindful of other Participants**
Even in remote meetings, there is a “Chair” person. If you know your audience is unfamiliar with zoom etc., it may be worth a quick explanation of the etiquette of features such as raising your hand. A cheat sheet could be prepared in advance. It will take more time for someone with deafness to make their point. The chairperson will need to be mindful of this, and, that this person will need to be focussing on their BSL interpreter. There may be a reliance on lipreading, so positioning of participants in good lighting will help to ensure that facial expressions and lip patterns can also be viewed clearly.

**Sign Language Interpreter/Electronic Notetaker**
Don’t forget, if a BSL Interpreter is attending to provide communication support for those using British Sign Language (BSL), they will also need an invitation to the meeting! An Electronic Notetaker can join the meeting and type a record of what is said, maybe simply through the chat function or on the 'Share Screen' function if required. Only one participant can share their screen at a time on Zoom, which can create a challenge. Some Deaf BSL users rely on two screens to see the chat while the meeting is on the screen, **however this is not preferable.**

# **'Pin Video'**

Most signers will wish to use the 'Pin Video' feature to be able to see their Sign Language Interpreter during the meeting. This feature will enable them to watch the interpreter by keeping them on screen and in view throughout the meeting.

Participant's can 'pin' using a PC or Mac, by clicking on the three dots in the top right corner of the chosen participant's thumbnail video screen and click 'pin video'. The pinned video will remain stationary and visible at all times during the meeting for the participant to view. IPad or Smartphone, users can double tap on the chosen video screen to 'pin'.

# **'Spotlight'**

Hosts can 'Spotlight' a particular participant who will then be viewed as the primary active speaker. To 'spotlight' a person when in a meeting, go to 'Participants' and click on the arrow at the right of the person you wish to spotlight, click the 'Spotlight' feature. Usually, there needs to be a minimum of three participants in the meeting with video on and this feature can only be enabled by the host. Due to the range of remote providers, you may want to check that the provider you are using offers these features

# **Handling large groups**

This is a particular challenge for deaf people who use visuals to create context. When not all participants are on view at the same time, it can be very distracting and disorientating to know who is asking the question and when they start or finish. The chairperson will need to help in identifying the person and clarifying the question. The chat box can be helpful for people with hearing loss to read any questions, but a BSL user will not easily be able to do this whilst watching their signer.

They are most likely to want to ask their own questions through the signer. The chairperson, therefore, may have to be mindful of looking for any signal that the interpreter is trying to gain their attention.

However, the Deaf BSL user may well raise their hand to alert you to their wish to speak.

**Raise Hand**Participants will have been made aware of the Raise Hand function which can be used to alert the host if they wish to ask a question or comment. This can be found within 'Participants' at the bottom of the screen.

# **'Chat'**

The Chat function can be used by the host and participants to communicate separately within the meeting. Messages can be sent privately or publicly using the chat facility to the host or to other participants to ask questions, raise comments or seek clarification. Files can also be shared/uploaded within the Chat facility.

# **Breakout Rooms**

Breakout rooms can be set up and introduced to facilitate smaller group discussion. The host can assign participants into these groups with the addition of communication support if required.

**Review:**

* Share lots of information in advance
* Ensure that any d/Deaf participant has some prior knowledge of helpful features such as Raise Hand, Pin, Chat etc.
* Allow them time to assimilate information
* Enable any live transcribe features in advance
* Invite communication support to your meeting
* Set up your meeting in good lighting

**Real-time captioning**
is another request that can be made by deaf audience members. Such requests are typically satisfied by using a professional captioner, who in real time creates a written transcript of what is said. The transcript could be broadcast on a screen for everyone to see, or on an individual's laptop display. In the not-too-distant future, automated or crowdsourced speech-to-text may replace professional captioner. Regardless of how real-time captioning is done, it is important to note that a deaf audience member can focus on only one thing at a time: the captions, the speaker, or the slides. Again, there is a slight delay in transforming speech to text. This means that the same principles applicable to sign-language translation also apply to real-time captioning.

**Personal assistive listening devices for** people who are deaf or hard of hearing include hearing aids and cochlear implants. Since these devices generally do not completely restore hearing, those wearing them often want to be able to read the lips of a speaker while listening. This may mean that the speaker should be as close as possible to the audience and face the audience as much as possible. Some assistive listening devices have FM capability. In this case, the speaker may be asked to wear an additional microphone so that the speaker's voice arrives more clearly at the listening device.

**Sign-language interpreters**are often requested by deaf audience members. It is important to recognize that a deaf audience member using an interpreter can focus on only one thing at a time: the interpreter, the speaker, or the slides. Furthermore, interpreters are really language translators, so there is a slight delay from when the speaker says something to when the deaf person gets the same information. This means that when referring to information on a slide, it is good to pause for a moment to allow time for the translation and the attention shift to the slide.