

Tips for Employers for Deaf employees working in organisation

Access to Work (AtW):

It is government funded scheme to enable disabled people to have access in work place. AtW is wide range of scheme for disabled people and this information will specifically direct you to enable deaf people with varying hearing degree loss to fit in your organisation. AtW can be funded to provide communication support for Deaf people who preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL) or Sign Support English (SSE). You as an employer do not have to pay for the interpreter as it will be funded by AtW. However there are some things that you need to know, there are criteria for getting funding support for interpreter for example within 6 weeks of deaf employees starting work will get full funding, however if applying for ATW after 6 weeks of employment the AtW will fund up to 80% of approved cost between £300 and £10,000. If over £10,000, AtW will pay 100% of the cost.

Communication:

There are different communication requirements, some prefer lip reading, some prefer BSL, SSE or some prefer Palantypist or in other word 'Speech To Text Reporter' (STTR). Please refer to BID website for definition of Deafness as there are Lip reading, BSL and SSE explained. STTR is someone who type in the information that had been spoken by someone, for example in a meeting someone is speaking and the palantypist is typing what the person is speaking and the deaf person read what it had been said. It is important to respect each individual deaf person communication needs and ensure that they completely understand on what is happening. It is important to have communication support for training, team meeting, performance review and other times that require to communicate with the deaf worker or whole of organisation.



Good Lighting:

It is important to enable Deaf worker to have good lighting as they cannot hear and need sights to see things and to communicate. When communicating with a Deaf worker, ensure that it is in well lit room and your face are not in front of bright lights.



Room arrangement:

Depending the working environment that the deaf person are working in, it is important that the deaf person have clear vision of the room to see what is happening. For example in factory setting, it is essential that the deaf person can see another worker to see what is happening and have clear vision of the room so anything happening and can access to the deaf person quickly and interact with other workers. Another example in the office environment that the Deaf person can see everyone in the room and have a clear lighting to see what is happening and able to interact with other workers, can see anyone coming in and out of the office, not facing to the wall.



Health and Safety:

There is some equipment that can enable safety in the work place for deaf workers. Fire alarm is one of the essential equipment and there are choices of fire alarm that can be selected. It is essential to include the deaf worker in the decision making on selecting fire alarm equipment and explain the reason behind the choice of the equipment. The choices are paging alarm system, flashing lights system or amplified sound alarm system. When there are health and safety training it is essential to organise communication support meeting the deaf worker need to ensure that they are up to date on health and safety information and training.



Equipment:



There is varying equipment that can be provided to deaf worker, there is Mini-com which enable deaf person to communicate on the phone, or phone amplifier which increase the volume of the phone for the deaf person to hear on the phone. Loop system is another equipment which some deaf workers found useful, it is a system that eliminate background noise and can hear what the lead person are saying. There is flashing lights to inform deaf worker that the phone is ringing or a vibrating system to inform that the phone is ringing or fire alarm.

Training:

Having your staff trained on Deaf Awareness would benefit your deaf worker. Not only having Deaf Awareness training would benefit to your workforce which enhance their skills in other areas. The other training option that which may benefit your organisation 'Communication Tactics' which encourage people to use their common sense to communicate with people in different language. Some deaf people preferred to communicate in sign language and staff volunteer to learn may benefit your workforce working together more effectively.



Additional note.: The details above are accurate to 19th November 2008, the details may change subject to Law or policy changes. It is suggested that you to check your organisation policy which may differ from this fact sheet

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