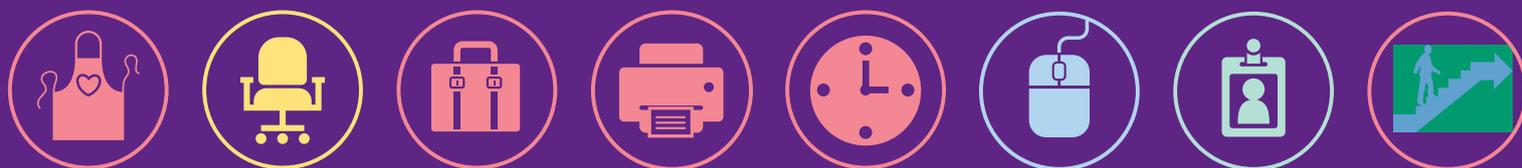




sense

connecting sight, sound and life

How can people who are deafblind be supported to find work?



This factsheet contains information about how to support people who are deafblind that wish to enter, or stay in, employment. It includes links to useful resources for people who are deafblind.

If you have a consultation with a person who is deafblind that has been recently diagnosed, or whose needs have changed, this factsheet may be useful.

What is deafblindness?

Deafblindness is a “combined sight and hearing impairment [which] causes difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility”.¹

It is important to recognise that deafblindness is not just a deaf person who cannot see, or a blind person who cannot hear. The two impairments combine to increase the effects of each.

Many people assume that if someone is ‘deafblind’ they will have no sight or hearing. This is true for some individuals but most people who are deafblind will have some sight and/or hearing that they can use.

Types of deafblindness

- Congenital deafblindness is when an individual is born with a sight and hearing impairment or develops sight and hearing loss before they have developed language in their early years.
- Acquired deafblindness refers to a person who loses their sight and hearing after they have developed language in their early years. This includes age-related hearing and visual impairment.

Causes of deafblindness

There are number of causes of deafblindness, including age-related and genetic conditions. Two lower incidence causes are Usher

¹ Think Dual Sensory, Department of Health, 1995

Syndrome and CHARGE. Both are genetic conditions that affect vision and hearing. Individuals with these conditions will be affected very differently and so will have varying degrees of vision and hearing. More details on both conditions can be found at:

www.sense.org.uk/content/different-types-usher-syndrome; and

www.sense.org.uk/content/charge-syndrome.

Things to consider for employment

When properly supported, people who are deafblind can undertake a range of jobs.

If someone who is deafblind wishes to learn more about employment opportunities, they should be made aware that there are existing schemes and legal frameworks in place to help support them both into and in employment:

Access to Work

This is a publicly funded employment support programme that can provide practical support for disabled people to enter or stay in employment. Support can be provided when it is needed beyond reasonable adjustments.

Examples of support that people who are deafblind can access through the scheme include British Sign Language interpreters, communicator guide² support, Speech-to-Text reporters (STTR)³, and computer magnification software.

Many employers and people who are deafblind do not know about Access to Work, and it is important to bring this useful resource to their attention.

Reasonable Adjustments

There is a reasonable adjustments duty under the Equality Act (2010) that requires employers to take positive steps to ensure that disabled employees can fully participate in employment. This includes during the recruitment process.

People who are deafblind can get advice on reasonable adjustments from the Disability Employment Advisers at their local Jobcentre Plus.

Useful resources for signposting

Further information on deafblindness and support available:

www.sense.org.uk/content/about-deafblindness

Recruitment website for disabled people:
www.evenbreak.co.uk/

Further information on Access to Work:
www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview

Access to Work fact sheet for customers:
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/527785/access-to-work-customer-factsheet.pdf

Information on reasonable adjustments for disabled people:
www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers

Contacting Jobcentre Plus:
www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

² A professional who acts as the eyes and ears of the person who is deafblind, including ensuring that communication is clear: <https://www.sense.org.uk/content/communicator-guides>

³ A STTR types a word for word account of what is being said and the information appears on screen in real time for users to read.