

How to help patients with **Hearing Loss**

A guide for GPs,
Opticians and
Dentists



The Hearing Coach
live well with hearing loss

1 in 6 people in the UK has hearing loss. Chances are you will see someone with hearing loss in your healthcare practice every day.

Some patients will wear hearing aids or implants; some won't. Some will speak and lip-read, others will use sign language or communicate by writing notes.

Whatever your patient's level of hearing loss and preferred mode of communication, the key thing is that they hear and understand while they are at your practice. It's one thing not catching what a friend says in a cafe, it's quite another missing a vital piece of information from your healthcare adviser.

This 5-minute guide sets out some simple steps you can take to make your healthcare practice more accessible to patients with hearing loss.

Making an appointment

Many patients with hearing loss cannot hear well on the phone. And you can't assume that they have someone who can call on their behalf.

Consider:

- enabling communication and appointment requests by email, SMS or secure online system.
- asking patients to let you know they have a hearing impairment, and how they prefer your staff to communicate with them.

Reception and waiting areas

Receptions areas tend to be noisy. It's embarrassing for any patient to have a shouted conversation because they're struggling to hear the receptionist.

As many patients with hearing loss will not hear staff calling out their name for the consultation.

Consider:

using a number system or an electronic sign to alert patients.
encouraging receptionists to offer a quieter space if needed.
turning down any TV and using subtitles instead.

During patient consultations

There are many simple (and free) ways you can make it easier for your patients with hearing loss to hear and understand during their healthcare consultations.

Remember to:

- Close windows and doors and turn off any noisy heating or cooling systems to reduce background noise.
- Ensure the room is well lit so your patient can see your face, and don't sit with the window behind you. If you need to work in a dark room (for example opticians) ensure a light is focused on your face during conversations.
- Face your patient rather than look at the computer screen. If you are typing notes or preparing a prescription, wait until you have finished before talking.
- Speak normally. There's no need to speak more slowly, and exaggerating your lip movements makes it harder for patients to read your lips.
- Remove any mask before speaking, or use a clear one.
- During examinations ask another member of staff to face the patient so they can relay questions and requests to change position when your patient has their back to you.
- Rephrase sentences if your patient is struggling to pick up what you're saying.
- Check after every important point or message that your patient has understood you.
- Write down important information.
- Be prepared to write down everything you say if your patient is really struggling.

As you can see from this short guide, providing access for patients with hearing loss costs very little. It's more about flexibility and thinking ahead.

If you would like more help to make your practice accessible to patients with hearing loss, we'd love to speak to you. Our details are on the next page.



The Hearing Coach

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Here at The Hearing Coach we help people with hearing loss to thrive in their personal and professional lives.

Each client's experience of our service is highly individual. But we can offer:

- an assessment of their needs at home and at work, and recommended solutions
- training on the most effective way to use technology to make hearing easier
- coaching on adjusting to their hearing loss, and its impact on their life.

For healthcare practices we provide:

- deaf awareness courses to improve understanding of hearing loss in a healthcare setting
- reviews and practical recommendations to improve access for patients with hearing loss.

To find out more about our services:

Call: 0161 696 8174

Email: lisa@thehearingcoach.co.uk

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