



# HEARING DIFFICULTY?

Information about services and support





# Foreword

Did you know that 1 in 6 people in the Borders have some loss of hearing?

You may know from your own experience that hearing problems do cause communication difficulties. This can lead to embarrassment, frustration or feeling left out.









Having to concentrate all the time to hear what other people say can be very tiring.

Deafness is often misunderstood. This booklet has been prepared to give you the help and information you may need to:

- improve the quality of your life, and
- tell you about the services for Deaf and hard of hearing people in the Borders.



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## Try this five-minute hearing test

### SCORING

		<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Half the time</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Never</i>
		3	2	1	0
1	I have a problem hearing over the telephone.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	I have trouble following the conversation when two or more people are talking at the same time.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	People complain that I turn the TV volume too loud.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	I have to strain to understand conversations.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5	I miss hearing some common sounds like the phone or doorbell ringing.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6	I have trouble hearing conversations in a noisy background such as a party.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7	I get confused about where sounds come from.	_____	_____	_____	_____

	<i>Almost Always</i>	<i>Half the time</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Never</i>
	3	2	1	0
8 I misunderstand some words in a sentence and need to ask people to repeat themselves.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9 I especially have trouble understanding the speech of women and children.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10 I have worked in noisy places.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11 Many people I talk to seem to mumble (or don't speak clearly).	_____	_____	_____	_____
12 People get annoyed because I misunderstand what they say.	_____	_____	_____	_____
13 I misunderstand what others are saying and make the wrong responses.	_____	_____	_____	_____
14 I avoid social activities because I cannot hear well and fear I'll give the wrong response.	_____	_____	_____	_____

*To be answered by a  
family member or friend:*

- 15 Do you think this \_\_\_\_\_  
person has a hearing  
loss?

## SCORING

If you have a blood relative who has a hearing loss, add another 3 points. Then total your points.

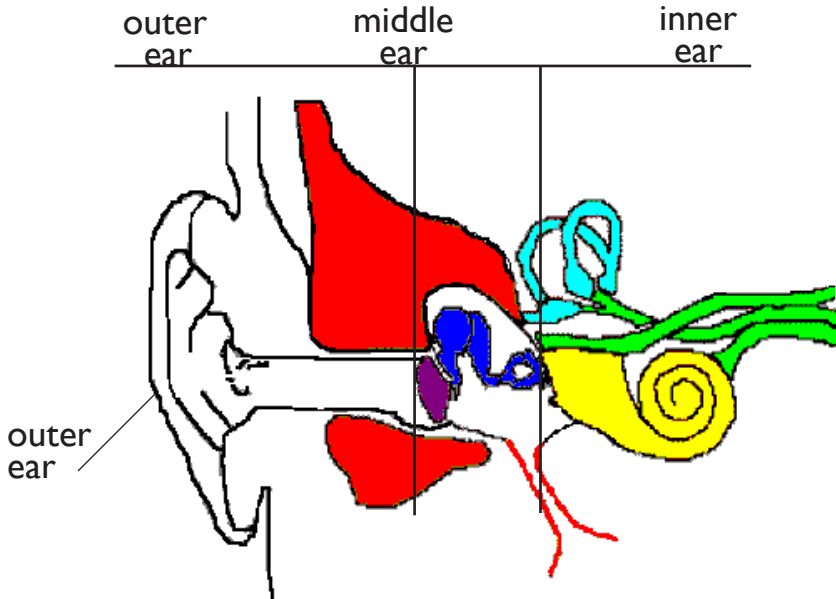
- 0 - 4**      Unlikely to need action
- 5 - 9**      See your GP for advice - take this test result with you
- 10 and Over**      Quite possible that you would benefit from a hearing aid

## What to do if you think you have a hearing problem

- 1 Arrange an appointment to see your GP. Take your completed hearing test with you.
- 2 Your GP may refer you to Audiology or to the Ear, Nose and Throat Department at the Borders General Hospital.



# The Ear



## Different types of deafness

There are 2 types of deafness:

### **Conductive deafness**

Sound vibration does not pass through the middle ear structures easily

*and*

### **Sensori neural deafness**

Where the cause of the deafness is within the inner ear or the auditory nerve

## Common causes of deafness

### Conductive

- Ear wax
- Glue ear - common in children (otitis media)  
Restricted movement of bones in middle ear (otosclerosis)
- Hole in eardrum (perforation)

### Sensori neural

Caused by damage/deterioration of tiny hair cells within the inner ear.  
This damage can be a result of:-  
Exposure to loud noise  
Serious head injury  
Gradual ageing process (presbycusis)  
**or**  
Disease, such as mumps or measles

**The inner ear is also the source of many other conditions such as:-**

### Tinnitus

Buzzing or ringing noises heard in the ear or head

*and*

### Vertigo and balance

Feeling dizzy, sick and have problems with balance

# What Happens at Audiology

The Audiology Team works in association with the Ear, Nose and Throat Service based at the Borders General Hospital.

## **Referrals are accepted from:**

- GPs
- Health visitors
- Speech and language therapists
- Other health care professionals, and from
- Education and Social Work Services.

## **How we can help you:**

- Hearing tests and assessment of hearing loss for all ages
- Fitting and provision of hearing aids
- Information, advice and support on management of hearing aids
- Hearing re-assessment and reviews
- Balance testing and Tinnitus counselling
- Appointments for:
  - ◆ re-tube
  - ◆ repairs
  - ◆ maintenance
  - ◆ checking or reviewing hearing aids

- Batteries for hearing aids available **free of charge** at many Health Centres throughout the Borders **OR** by post from the Audiology Department, Borders General Hospital
- Links with other organisations.

Several visits may be needed. These vary in time from 10 minutes to over an hour.

## **Hearing Test:**

- We will ask about difficulties you may have at home with phone, door, communication or alarms
- You will have your ears examined
- You will have the test in a soundproof room
- You will wear headphones and listen to different sounds
- We record the quietest levels you can hear
- Referral to Ear, Nose and Throat Consultant may be needed depending on your results.

## **If You Need A Hearing Aid (not everyone does):**

- An ear mould of your ear is required
- After the ear is examined it is filled with putty-like material
- This gives an impression of your ear, and is sent away for processing.

## Hearing Aid Fitting:

- The hearing aid is prescribed for your hearing levels
- When you attend for your hearing aid fitting you will be given a full explanation of how it works
- You will be shown how to put it into your ear and asked to operate the controls
- We will explain how to look after your hearing aid and where to get batteries
- An information pack is provided, which covers Audiology and Sensory Services available in this area
- If you have difficulties at home with phone, door, communication or alarms, we can refer you to the Sensory Services Team based at the Borders General Hospital for assessment.

## Hearing Aid Review:

- We will check how you get on with the hearing aid
- We will fine tune the aid, if necessary
- We will send you a follow up questionnaire.

## Contacting us

Audiology Department  
Borders General Hospital  
MELROSE  
TD6 9BS

**Voice phone** 01896 826531

**Fax:** 01896 823476 (main hospital)

## **Who is entitled to help?**

- Anyone who is Deaf regardless of income
- Adults and children who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Families and Carers of deaf children
- Those who work or live with deaf people
- Deaf people with additional disabilities
- Deafblind people.

## **How can we help you?**

Our service provides access to a specialist worker with people who are members of the Deaf Community and a community care assessor with people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing who will be able to advise you about a range of support services.

The Sensory Services Team has good links with Education and Health, particularly Audiology and with local user groups.

## **Information and advice is available on all issues to do with deafness including:**

- Welfare Benefits
- Services from national organisations
- Local developments or groups e.g. lip reading and sign language classes.

Equipment - may be provided, which will help you to remain independent and safe. For example:

- Doorbells
- Smoke alarms
- TV listening aids
- Telephone equipment

Advocacy and Communication - advice and support can be offered where your deafness may be leading to difficulties.

in everyday living or at work. Where appropriate, arrangements can be made to provide a BSL/English interpreter or access to communication support.

Employment and Housing - if you need advice or help, the workers can support you in contacting these service providers.

Community Care - you can be assessed for support to help keep you safe and as independent as possible. For more information speak with one of our workers.

You will usually be offered a home visit. We will talk with you about the kind of help you think you need. We will agree together on what would best support you.

## Contacting Us

Sensory Services Team  
Unit 1 & 2 Block 5  
Tweedbank Industrial Estate  
Galashiels TD1 3RS

**Voice Phone:** 01450 364644

**SMS Text** 07786 856597

**Email:** [sensoryservices@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:sensoryservices@scotborders.gov.uk)



Easy, relaxed communication between individuals and in home, work or social situations is often disrupted by hearing loss. There are tactics which can be used to help minimise the difficulties. Here are some tips:-

When someone speaks to you, clues can be gained from what you hear and see. You may be able to create a situation so that as many clues as possible are available.

## **The best conditions for listening:**

- A room with soft furnishings absorbs sounds and reduces the echo effect
- Try to reduce background noise. Noisy places, such as busy streets, large shops, hospitals and railway stations will be more difficult because of background noise
- Ask others to face you, to speak clearly and a little louder. Mumbling and shouting make it more difficult to pick up the words of the speaker.

## **The best way to understand conversation:**

- Don't be afraid to tell people you have difficulty hearing
- Make sure the room is well lit
- Have your back to the light source
- Position yourself 3 - 6 feet away from the speaker
- Have regular eye checks

- Try to watch the speaker's lips. Do not be afraid to tell people that you rely on a bit of lip reading
- Be aware that when you are tired, communication will be more challenging
- Use a notebook if you have to.

### **Ask other people to help by:**

- Attracting your attention before speaking
- Facing you and not hiding their lip movements
- Not shouting but speaking clearly and distinctly
- Making the subject of the conversation as clear as possible
- Repeating something you haven't grasped or by rephrasing it. Some words are more difficult to lip read than others.

### **Deaf sign language users and communication**

Around 50,000 Deaf people in this country use British Sign Language as their first or preferred language. BSL is the language of the Deaf community. It is mainly used by people who were born severely or profoundly Deaf, or who became Deaf before acquiring speech.

BSL is recognised as a language in its own right with its own complex grammar and structure.

Some Deaf people will use Sign Supported English (SSE), which is a combination of signs from BSL together with English Grammar.

Sign Language Interpreters give Deaf people access to information which hearing people take for granted. Sign Language Interpreters will enable a Deaf person to have equal access to:

- Work interviews
- Union meetings
- GP appointments and hospital visits
- Theatre, solicitors, local authority services (education, housing, social services).

In the Scottish Borders an Interpreter can be booked by contacting the Scottish Borders Interpreter Agency based within the Sensory Services Team at the Borders General Hospital.

There are few Interpreters so it is advised to book well in advance, if possible.

# Scottish Borders Interpreter Agency

British Sign Language (BSL) is an independent language. It has a structure and grammar different from spoken or written English. It is the preferred language of over 50,000 people in the UK.

## How we can help you

Sign Language Interpreters are trained to assist with communication between Deaf and hearing people.

An Interpreter can:

- interpret between BSL and spoken English
- give information on issues relating to interpreting
- keep all information of appointments or meetings strictly confidential
- enable a Deaf person to access information, resources and services directly.

## Contacting Us

**Voice phone:**

01450 364644

**SMS Text:**

07786 856597

**Email:**

[sbia@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:sbia@scotborders.gov.uk)

# Scottish Borders Lipreading Services

You may want to join a class if you find that you need the TV louder and you regularly miss out on conversations. Having problems with hearing can also leave you feeling cut off and alone.

Lipreading classes take place in small, friendly groups and are free.

Although the class sizes differ, it is better that they do not go above 12 members. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- the flow of the lesson
- the need for seating to be in a horseshoe to allow everyone a clear unobstructed view
- the length of time for each lesson
- the size of the loop system
- the need for everyone to be close enough to lipread.

## The Lesson

Classes last for about 2 hours and are very relaxed. You will learn how to read lip patterns in a fun way with other people who share your difficulties.

Just as important is the opportunity to be with other Deaf and hard of hearing people who understand the experience of living with hearing loss.

Visiting speakers give useful advice on a whole range of issues related to hearing loss.

People attend for a variety of reasons:

- Some are referred by professionals
- Some have seen the promotional literature
- Some have heard from friends.

The aim is to help you feel more confident about your deafness and to cope better with day-to-day living. Anyone with any degree of hearing loss is welcome and can benefit from joining a class.

**Telephone: 01450 364644**

## The Feedback

The following are all quotes from people who attend classes:

“I am more relaxed about my deafness and coping with life”.

“I am taking a more active role in social events and in day-to-day living”.

“I am prepared to speak to strangers instead of letting other people do the talking”.

For more information and up to date details, please visit Scottish Borders Council website – disabilities – Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing – lipreading



### Alternative format/language

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