

## Members with Hearing Impairment

### Introduction

About 30% of people over the age of 60 have a measurable hearing loss and above the age of 74 this increases to about 75 %. U3AC therefore has a significant number of members who have some trouble hearing.

**Here are some useful hints to bear in mind:**

#### Set the ground rules.

Be open about the problems of hearing from the start and invite people to indicate if they **cannot** hear, (each person will have an individual pattern of hearing loss). Repeat this invitation from time to time at subsequent classes and make sure people have heard you ask.

Make sure people are sitting where they can comfortably listen.

Request that no one interrupts others.

If you will be doing most of the talking during the class, explain that you will repeat questions and comments from the group to be sure that everyone can follow a discussion unless you have already established that everyone can hear everyone else. (This will depend on the group size and layout of seating.)

With discussion groups, it is essential for everyone to be able to hear and see everyone else. Consider limiting the number of participants to no more than 12, and taking great care over the seating arrangement. It is useful to establish a convention that people raise their hand whenever they can't hear.

Remember that supporting visual material is helpful, either key words written up or on screens, though see comments under lip reading. Combined visual/auditory presentations are particularly valuable when your students have a mild hearing problem as well as a slight visual one too – the one form can aid the other.

#### Lip reading

People who cannot hear well will (sometimes) be skilled in lip reading, and most people lip read to some extent anyway, so please make sure:

- You face the audience, the light is on your face and the room is well lit
- You do not stand with your back to a window where your face will merely be a blank silhouette
- You do not cover your face with your hands, speak whilst looking down, or move about too much
- If you use a writing board of some kind, write first and then turn round to address the class. If you speak facing the board your words will be lost
- You do not overuse a screen. Your face will be cast into shadow by a bright picture and people may have to choose between reading your lips or reading the screen. This is a problem for almost everyone, having to choose between listening and looking; however, it is particularly useful for those with poor hearing to be able to read.

It is important not to speak too fast and to allow time for everyone to read the screen without having at the same time to listen. Also avoid too much information on each screen.

- Participants may hear you, but be unable to hear other class members who address questions or remarks to you or others. Repeat questions from the floor before you answer them.

#### Use of words

The most common form of hearing loss is presbycusis otherwise known as age related hearing loss. The characteristic of this form of hearing loss is a loss of the high notes. Some voices will therefore be more difficult to hear than others. It is a good idea to pitch your voice at a low register.

If people are struggling to hear, try to express your meaning in a different way. Repeating the same words louder will not help and may simply annoy people who can hear.

Always write down proper names or specific terms and numbers as these are impossible to guess.

#### Hearing loop

There is an induction loop installed in room 1 and room 5(?), but it will not work unless it is switched on (check with office?). Remind your group of its existence; it is useful only to those who have set their hearing aid to the T- position.

*Acknowledgement: We are most grateful to Cambridgeshire Hearing Help (previously CAMTAD) for the original list, modified to meet the needs of U3AC students.*