Setting Up Accessible Meetings Online

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**Best Set-Up for Working Accessibly Online**

* **Zoom** is the **recommended platform** for online meetings. Microsoft Teams is recommended if you are interested in moving your day-to-day operations online.
* Zoom has the **simplest user interface** and is easy to use on a variety of devises.
* Ensure you have a good **microphone**, **camera** and that you have good **lighting**. If someone is requiring lip-reading, then they need to be able to see you clearly.
* Ensure your **Wi-Fi** is at its strongest. You may need to move your device closer to your router to achieve this.
* BSL interpretation online is far more difficult than face-to-face meetings. Please do still **offer face-to-face meetings** when you are able to.

**Preparation:** Planning, Documentation, Testing, Housekeeping

* Give the person who is responsible for booking access and/or creating accessible documentation at least **2 weeks’ notice** and send out your documentation to participants a few days in advance of the meeting.
* Two key documents that you should prepare:

1. Preparation Document/Agenda (for participants)  
   This should include:

* Link for the meeting
* Any passwords
* Housekeeping rules
* List of attendees
* Timed agenda

This should be made available, as standard, in these formats:

* Standard print (14-point font), as a Word document and as a PDF
* Large print (18-point font), as a Word document and as a PDF
* Audio version
* You should also consider creating an easy-read version and a BSL video version.

1. Bookings Information Document (for support workers)   
   This should include the same as the above, as well as:

* The name and bio of the organisation
* The nature and purpose of the meeting
* A summary of a previous similar meeting (this could be minutes)
* Names of attendees, their roles in the meeting and within the organisation. Remember, BSL interpreters will be fingerspelling names which is why it is important to have these in advance.
* Give **clear instructions as to how to join the meeting** online and do not assume that your participants will be familiar with the technology; what might they need to download, sign up to, what they need to do when they get there, what will they see when they first log on?
* Consider what access provision you are arranging; captioning, BSL interpreters. **Bring in your support workers before the meeting begins** and ensure they are comfortable with the set-up and it will work for the participants.
* Make sure your **participants know what access tools are available** at the top of the meeting. Daryl suggests a simple slide outlining the rules of the meeting and the access provisions, the host should then read the slide as participants join the meeting to ensure no one misses out on the information.
* Remember some screen reader technology picks up on the chat function on Zoom as well as the captions. It is useful to remind participants of this in the housekeeping rules to **reduce the use of the shared chat function**.

**Setting up:** Captioners & Interpreters

* You can set up automatic captions on Zoom using services such as rev.com for a reasonable price. This is easy to set up via instructions on their website.
* Remember **automated captions are not perfect** and can be off-putting when they produce too many errors. They often do not recognise certain accents and voice patterns.
* **Captions produced by real people** are a better solution. They can set up the technology for you if you give them admin rights to your meeting.
* To set up captions you will usually need to copy an API key from the Zoom software to paste on their software.
* For BSL interpretation on Zoom you can either use **multi-spotlight** to keep the interpreters visible at all times **or** allow selected attendees to **multi-pin** windows on their software as participants. The **multi-spotlight option is preferable**, so you do not have to single out participants.
* Allow the interpreters into the room ahead of the Deaf participants so the access is in place before they arrive and so that the interpreters and the Chair can agree protocols.
* The **interprets will swap every 15 minutes**. If you are using the multi-pin function, then they can either do this independently by using a signal or verbally, so the meeting pauses temporarily to allow the swap to occur. If you are using the multi-spotlight function, then it is the responsibility of the Chair, Host or designated access officer to change the spotlight over; usually the non-working interpreter will message this person when they require a swap. Again, spotlighting is the preferred option.
* Remember, **if you are screen-sharing** on Zoom then the Deaf participant **cannot** pin the interpreter.
* It is important that everyone on screen has their **name** clearly marked so the interpreters can easily follow who is speaking.
* The co-working interpreter will be able to read the chat function but the working interpreter will not.

**Setting Up:** Presentations & Panels

* For single speakers, interviews or presentations, arrange a time with the person giving a talk or presentation to **record the interview or talk ahead of the meeting**. It gives the presenter time to speak, and make mistakes, and creates a more relaxed environment for the speaker. You can then **caption** and share the video in the meeting.
* For panels with multiple speakers, get the speakers to **introduce and audio describe** themselves **at the start** of the meeting or panel.
* If you are sharing slides or images it is important to ensure you are considering how you will **audio describe** that image or presentation. Consider the clarity of fonts and colours on any presentations and ensure they are **high-contrast and large print**.

**Setting Up:** Establishing Roles & Responsibilities

* It is sensible to create the following roles to run the meeting:

1. **Host/Chair** of the meeting.
2. **Monitor of the Chat Function**: they can be privately messaged if participants have something to raise rather than using the shared chat function
3. **Point of Contact for Support Workers**: they can monitor or manage interpreter swaps, support the support workers with any technical issues, the support workers can also message them if they need someone to speak slower or more clearly.
4. **Access Support Worker**: participants and speakers have a designated person they can get in touch with if they have any access requirements during the meeting.

**During the Meeting:** The Chat Function

* The chat function can often be confusing for lots of people so consider carefully how it is used.
* However, the chat function can be **useful as an access channel** for:

1. Anyone who is not using their voice to communicate
2. Anyone who has access requirements during the meeting
3. Anyone who is having technical difficulties

* There may be points in the meeting where you allocate a designated time for participants to ask questions using the function but this should only be used in conjunction with someone whose role it is to monitor this and read out the questions asked and repeat them back to the room.

**During the Meeting:** Breaks

* Scheduled breaks should **be at least 10 minutes every hour**. Ensure these breaks are taken even if it is tempting to ‘power through’. These breaks are for everyone including support workers.
* **Private breaks**: it is your responsibility to ensure that participants feel able to switch off their camera and have a break when they need to, even if it is outside the scheduled break.

**During the Meeting:** Pause, Listen & Slow Down

* It is especially important online to **pause after you speak** online. Participants may be following the live captions or BSL interpreters and there will naturally be a delay in the translation or captions. Just because you have finished your sentence does not mean other people have!

**Additional Resources:**

Zoom Help Desk  
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>

Vocal Eyes Resources   
<https://vocaleyes.co.uk/services/resources>

Graeae Resources   
[https://graeae.org/about/resources](https://graeae.org/about/resources/)