

# Hearing Loss

A Jewish Care Interact Guide

## Hearing loss

From practical things like travelling alone to emotional things like maintaining your quality of life, living with hearing loss can be easier if you have a positive attitude and you're connected to the right resources.

Hearing loss has an impact on more than 10 million people in the UK. Often called the invisible disability, hearing loss can create subtle—and not so subtle—changes to many aspects of your life.

In the broadest terms, hearing loss alters your ability to communicate easily and naturally. It also changes the way you enjoy music, chit chat with friends or answer the telephone—those little things you might take for granted. Hearing loss can happen gradually over time or suddenly overnight, and the difference between partial and total hearing loss is pretty clear.

### Hearing loss: at home

Adjusting to hearing loss can give you a sense of victory, particularly when you overcome a situation that pops up in your daily routine.

### Communicating with friends, family and carers

For people with hearing loss, visual cues are really important. Eye contact is key, especially if you rely on lip-reading.

Sign language is another helpful form of communication if you have hearing loss. British Sign Language (BSL) is the first or preferred language of around 125,000 adults who are deaf in the UK.

Fingerspelling is another term for the BSL alphabet, but there is much more to BSL than just the ABCs. For instance, did you know there is a guide to signs specifically related to Jewish culture? Jewish Deaf Multimedia also has a Jewish terms glossary with video demonstrations on its YouTube page, but those signs are based on American Sign Language, not BSL.

Whether you wear hearing aids, read lips, use BSL or rely on any combination of these methods, your best chats will happen when you can speak face to face with someone and stand about three to six feet apart. Remind the other person to turn directly towards you and look you straight in the eye. Ask them to speak slowly and clearly in full sentences, have them repeat what they have to say (but no shouting, please!) or get them to write things down if all else fails. Be responsive and encourage others to do the same; body language and gestures are another great way to express ideas.

Some communication suggestions are just a matter of common sense. If there are several people talking together, remind everyone that it's better if they take turns. This also means they should not start a conversation with you and then walk out of the room. And yes, it's okay to ask them to put down their mobile phone so you can maintain better eye contact when you chat.

Ideally, try to find a quiet place where there aren't so many noises or distractions. If you're in a public space with lots of people, look for a well lit corner—your best bet is a spot where the light falls directly on the faces of the other people in the conversation. If you're in a restaurant, try to stay away from the kitchen where the hustle and bustle can be both noisy and distracting. And if you're in a place where there's background music, don't be shy about asking to have it turned down.

## Chatting on the phone

Using the telephone can be a great way to stay in touch and keep your independence. Fortunately, there are special accessories that can help you use your telephones, textphones and mobile phones.

You can continue using your traditional landline phone with a few simple adaptations. The easiest thing to do is to turn your ringer up and put your phone on a hard surface; that's a quick way to get the most out of your phone and best of all, it's free!

You can also adapt a regular phone by adding:

- Amplified hearing loop systems to increase the volume by several levels
- Extension bells so you hear your phone ring while you're away from it;
- Extension ringers to give you control over volume and ring tones (you may be able to hear some tones better than others, so this is important); and
- Visual call indicators to flash when the phone rings.

If you're a hearing aid user, look for phones that have an inductive coupler that supports the hearing loop setting. When it's set correctly, the inductive coupler can work with your hearing aids to shut out pesky background noises during your call.

A textphone allows you to use a keyboard to type in messages and display them on a screen. If you're using your textphone to chat with someone who doesn't have a textphone, Next Generation Text (NGT) service (formerly known as BT Text Relay, TextDirect or Typetalk) is a free way to send your message to a regular voice telephone.

This text-to-voice and voice-to-text relay service uses an operator to convert text into different formats. But don't worry about snoopers; the text operator will not be part of your phone call.

NGT service uses your computer, tablet or smart mobile device to make text calls. All you need is [the free NGT Lite app, which is available to download from the NGT service website](#). This app lets you speak and read at the same time, so conversations flow naturally.

As mobile phones become more commonplace, these devices can be especially helpful for people with hearing loss. Older phones used to generate radio frequencies that made buzzing sounds that could interfere with hearing aids; modern low interference models have worked to resolve this issue.

Hearing aid settings can help you get more from your mobile phone, since their T (hearing loop) and M (microphone) ratings can help you pick out what works best with your mobile phone. Ratings for both categories range from 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent), but unfortunately, some mobile phone manufacturers still don't use T and M ratings.

Neckloops and ear hooks can be helpful if interference is still a problem, and they work with most hearing aids that have a hearing loop setting. Hands-free kits can also help cut down on interference. All three—neckloops, ear hooks and hands-free kits—are available with Bluetooth wireless technology.

The speakerphone option on most mobile phones can be convenient, but it also means anyone and everyone can hear both sides of the conversation. And if you have the volume turned all the way up, the call could sound distorted.

Other apps like Skype or Facetime make it possible for you to communicate on your mobile phone or computer—as long as you have a microphone and a decent web camera. If you have an Internet connection that's fast and reliable, you can use these apps when you want to lip-read or use sign language to communicate. You can also use the chat box on these apps to type in text if your webcam is down or your connection is slow.

In a practical sense, just make sure you have at least two different types of telephones—don't rely strictly on only one kind of technology. Cordless landline phones may be convenient, but they won't work during power cuts; mobile phones are great as long as they have fully charged batteries and your service is reliable. Finally, if you're thinking about buying a new phone and still have questions, [check out some of the pointers in this article, "Dos and Don'ts when buying a phone for the deaf and hard of hearing"](#).

### **Answering the door**

While a missed phone call can usually be recorded on your answering machine, there is no such thing as an answering machine for your front door. However, there are doorbells that are extra loud; there are also some that use flashing lights or vibrations to create additional alerts.

Some of these devices are battery operated, which means they are so portable you can take them with you as you move in and out of the house. It's also possible to get transmission devices that send specific signals to a pager that is attached to your clothing. Whether you're upstairs or out in the garden, you won't miss another visitor or delivery person who rings your front doorbell.

View panels or side windows at the front door can be more helpful than a typical peephole to identify visitors. However, make sure they are installed far enough away from the lock so they don't provide easy access for burglars.

### **Watching films and television**

There are two different TV access services that can help you keep up with the latest television shows and films.

Subtitles are transcriptions that appear on screen during a film or television broadcast. Most TV remote controls have a button marked "subtitles"—all you have to do is press that button and they'll appear (as long as the programme you're watching has been captioned).

BBC iPlayer has subtitles on every programme. More than half of the programmes on ITV Player, 4oD and Demand 5 have subtitles available.

Most streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Instant Video and LoveFilm offer subtitles too these days, so you should have no problems if you're watching a film or programme—whether it's a DVD or something you stream online.

[The BBC website has a dedicated “Signed” area on its iPlayer](#), which showcases signed programmes. The BBC also has [BBC Two See Hear, a weekly magazine programme for people with hearing loss](#). The programme covers education, rights for people with hearing impairments, technology and language and is presented entirely in BSL; it is also broadcast with subtitles in English.

The British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT) has created a collection of programmes—made by deaf people for deaf people—using BSL. All of these shows are available to watch on the BSL Zone Player, and they range from chat shows and documentaries to comedies and dramas.

Television listeners are devices that allow you to watch television with the help of headphones, loop systems or personal amplifiers. Many of these devices are wireless, which means you won't have to deal with messy connections or trip hazards. Action for Hearing Loss has a helpful description that explains the benefits of these different TV listening options.

### **Cooking**

Cooking is one of those experiences that taps into all of your senses—from smell and taste to sight, touch and even sound. In the most practical terms, sounds associated with alarms, bells and timers can make all the difference for the chef who may want to multitask away from the cooker.

There are portable timers that vibrate or flash when they go off, so you can carry them around with you to let you know when the water has boiled or the pot roast is ready. There are even wristwatches that can be used as cooking timers when they're not being used as alarm clocks, just in case you want to have a quick snooze while your slow cooker simmers.

### **Home adaptations**

There are several things you can do to make life around the house safer to navigate and easier to manage.

### **Smoke alarms**

In 2005, the British Standards Institution published a national standard on smoke alarm systems for people with hearing loss. These systems include the following alerts to indicate when smoke or fire are detected:

- a self-contained alarm;
- a vibrating pad (this is the best way to alert you when you're in bed);
- a flashing strobe; and
- a vibrating wireless pager.

A control device will link all of the other components together. This can be wired or wireless and can be powered by mains, but it should be backed up by battery power.

### **Home decor**

If you wear hearing aids, soft furniture and carpeting can make a huge difference when it comes to managing background noise. You'll also want to create open sight lines throughout your floor plan;

this will make it easier for you to lip-read or sign with others in the house. Look for lighting that supports lip-reading or signing; mirrors can create glare and reflections, and shadows can make it tricky to see what other people are saying.

If you are deaf or have severe hearing loss, your local social services or councils may help with the costs of some of these adaptations for your home (particularly when it comes to fire safety equipment like smoke alarms and detectors). Contact your council or borough to find out about making home adaptations, or in [Northern Ireland, visit the Housing Executive website and check out the housing benefits and grants section.](#)

### Hearing dogs

Hearing dogs can be trained to alert you to specific sounds around the home like:

- Doorbells
- Telephones
- Cooker timers
- Alarm clocks
- Baby monitors
- Smoke alarms
- Calls from someone in the house (they can send the dog to let you know you are needed)
- Public fire sirens

Hearing dogs are provided to deaf people at no charge, and each puppy is trained and socialised to meet your specific needs. These dogs cannot only help you adapt to independent living around your home, they're great companions, too. [For more information on hearing dogs, visit Hearing Dogs for Deaf People website.](#)

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### Hearing loss: technology

The impact in changing technology provides new ways of hearing and communicating. We've already given you details about hearing loss: at home and the technology that can make life easier, but there are other devices that will come in handy.

#### Assistive technology

Assistive technology (AT) refers to technologies that are made to support people with specific impairments. For hearing impaired people, there are three commonly used devices: hearing aids, loops and FM systems.

#### Hearing aids

Hearing aids are perhaps the most common AT used by people with hearing loss, although there's no question that more people could benefit from wearing them. While it may take a little time for you to get used to it, a properly fitted hearing aid can improve your quality of life.

There are several resources regarding every aspect of hearing aids.

If you are in the Haywards Heath or Worthing areas, [Action for Deafness runs free courses on how to retube, clean and maintain your hearing aid.](#)

There are also several sites that provide hearing aid accessories and maintenance kits. Through DLF there is also [Living Made Easy—a wide range of listening equipment for hearing aid users](#) if you want to skip the assessment and go straight to the products.

### Hearing loops

Hearing loops (also known as audio induction loop systems or audio-frequency induction loops) consist of a microphone, an amplifier and a loop cable that is placed in and around a designated area—usually a room or a building. The cable acts as an antenna to generate a magnetic field in that space so sound can be picked up by other ATs such as hearing aids programmed to the proper setting (the T setting or loop programme). Ideally, the end result is less background noise and clearer speech.

If you use a digital hearing aid, your audiologist should programme it with an induction loop setting. When it is on this setting it will connect to most induction loops. There are two additional types of receivers: headsets (if you don't have or need a hearing aid) and neckloops (which work better with hearing aids). There are also infrared systems which work in the same way as induction loops for hearing aid users but need you to wear a neckloop.

Hearing loop systems are especially helpful in high traffic public spaces like concert halls, meeting rooms, reception areas, courtrooms, theatres and even places of worship. If your synagogue doesn't have a loop system, have them contact the JDA to find out more about financing and installation arrangements.

In some parts of the UK, loop systems may either be free or else subsidised by Social Services or Sensory Impairment Teams, depending on the results of your needs assessment. For more information on Hearing loops, visit the Hearing Link site.

### FM systems

FM systems are widely used in educational settings but can be just as appropriate in a situation where listening to a single sound source (speech/music/video) is difficult.

Also known as Radio Aids, FM systems are battery operated wireless devices that send sound from a speaker (who wears a transmitter) to a listener (who wears the receiver). FM systems may help you whether or not you wear hearing aids. They are really helpful in noisy places with bad acoustics or in large rooms where there is distance between the speaker and listener. [For more information on how FM systems work, visit Hearing Link.](#)

### Surgical AT for hearing loss

Cochlear implants (CI) is a surgical procedure that can help address hearing loss that happens when there is sensory damage to the hair cells in the cochlear portion of your ear. CI is a good option for people with severe sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL), especially when hearing aids or FM systems are not enough to do the trick.

While CI is not a cure for deafness, it can be very effective; however, the quality of sound after a CI

can be quite different since the procedure transmits less sound related information to the brain. Still, CI can help you understand speech better while improving your ability to hear environmental sounds and even enjoy music. [\[For an article that examines the bioethical perspectives of CI and Judaism, read, "Cochlear Implants and Jewish Law", written by Rabbi Darby J. Leigh.\]](#)

During the CI procedure, the surgeon places the device under the skin behind the ear. The device includes both external and internal components that mimic the transmission and reception behaviours of hearing aids and FM systems—but on a much smaller scale.

[Hearing Link has helpful information on Auditory brainstem implants \(ABI\) and middle ear implants \(MEA\).](#) There is also the [National Cochlear Implant Users Association, which is a good place to check out if you have CI or are considering it as an option.](#)

Bone anchored hearing aids (BAHA) may work well for people who cannot otherwise wear in the ear or behind the ear devices. BAHAs (also known as bone anchored hearing devices) use a surgical procedure to transmit sound through bone directly to the inner ear.

By bypassing the outer or middle ear, BAHA can increase hearing in noisy situations. In addition to improved speech understanding, it results in a natural sound with less distortion and feedback compared with conventional hearing aids. The ear canal is left open for comfort, and this transfer of sound gives a 360° sound awareness.

Hearing Link explains how BAHAs work and features a testimonial from one person who has opted for this surgery. The Ear Foundation also has a great deal of information on BAHA, including leaflets to download and forums to post questions and discuss other related issues.

### **Helpful hearing loss apps**

Most tablets and mobile phones now come with speakerphone and speech recognition options. Apple devices come with Siri, and Android devices come with a built-in speech recognition feature.

There are several other apps on the market to help you communicate. These apps are available for Apple devices from the iTunes store; for Android devices, you can download them from the Google Play store.

**BioAid** turns your phone into a hearing aid.

**Braci** records sounds around your home so your smartphone can alert you to smoke alarms, doorbells, telephones and intercoms.

**British Sign Language Finger Spelling** uses cartoons to teach you two handed BSL.

**Cochlear Baha® Support** includes general information, cleaning instructions, battery information, a troubleshooting guide and other tips for your system.

**Dragon Dictation** allows you to speak and instantly see your text or message.



**Hearing-Check** lets you check for sensorineural hearing loss without having to visit your doctor's office.

**MobileSign** uses more than 4000 signs to help you learn BSL.  
**Pedius** is a communication system that allows you to make conventional phone calls.

**Petralex® Radio** performs sound processing to suit individual hearing and delivers music, speech and any type of content.

**SoundFocus** lets you listen to music in full fidelity based on an audio profile that matches your hearing pattern, compensating for the spectrum of frequencies that your ear doesn't hear well.

**TapTap** causes your phone to flash and vibrate in order to attract your attention so you can respond. Cost: £2.29 from the iTunes store (as of February 2016).

**UHear** is a screening test that will help you find out if you have hearing loss.

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## Hearing loss: out and about

Living with hearing loss doesn't mean you have to give up a hobby or leisure pursuit you enjoy. And if you do decide to move on for whatever reason, see if you can find something else equally enjoyable to replace it. Here are some suggestions to help you broaden your horizons or get the most out of hobbies you already love.

### Travel

As we know all too well, travelling with a disability often requires careful and creative problem solving. Lack of understanding is just one of the barriers we face as disabled travellers and companions.

This guide has been designed to provide clear direction for before, during and after travel to ensure a trouble-free trip. Knowing what to expect makes life a lot easier and less stressful.

When you travel with hearing loss, sometimes "stuff" happens! These possible glitches come from the Hearing Link website:

- Mishearing announcements on busy train stations and in airports
- Asking directions from strangers
- Missing vital information announced by the tour guide
- Trying to lip-read a foreign language, even when you know the language well!
- Sitting in crowded restaurants and attempting to enjoy conversation
- Taking your hearing aids or cochlear implants out to swim and realising that you cannot hear when the swimming pool attendant tells you to leave the water

- Going on an expensive guided tour and not understanding a word

For additional holiday pointers, visit [Holidaying if you have hearing problems, offered through Hearing Link's site](#). [ABTA, a travel association for the UK, has a helpful Accessible travel page](#). For a site that offers [Holidays for deaf people, visit the Disabled Holiday Directory](#). Finally, for holidays specially designed for people with disabilities, check out [Tourism for All](#).

### Flying: taking to the skies

You may face some obstacles when travelling by air, especially when it comes to accessing information and communicating with airline staff members. Unfortunately, the Equality Act 2010 does not cover aircraft, which means check-in and airport services and facilities are covered, but in-flight services and entertainment are not.

As airlines disability facilities and services vary widely, it is worth doing some research before selecting an airline. Here are a few pointers to bear in mind when travelling by air:

- On booking your flight, remember to notify the airline that you are disabled and may require special assistance. A reminder 48 hours in advance of your flight is also a good idea. If you ask for assistance, make sure you have confirmation in writing (preferably on your ticket or itinerary).
- Keep in mind that airlines are allowed to move you if you wear hearing aids and are in a seat next to an emergency exit.
- Ask plenty of questions at flight check-in. Are there real-time visual information displays so you can keep on top of announcements regarding departures, arrivals, gates, boarding, delays and emergency information? Are there induction loops or textphones? Can you get special assistance and board first along with other passengers who have disabilities? Does anyone on the crew have Deaf Awareness Training or know BSL? Make sure to let the cabin crew know you have hearing loss.
- You do have a right to travel with your hearing dog, but you'll need to follow the rules on the GOV.UK website, which can be found on the page, [Pet travel: entering and returning to the UK](#).

For more information, check out [Transport if you're disabled section of the GOV.UK site](#).

### Grabbing the train

With the right information, planning and know-how, travelling by train can be hassle free. Let's get on board!

To start off, it is useful to identify the barriers that might affect your journey and then consider the different options available and next steps. If you need to book passenger assistance, you should do this least 24 hours prior to your journey. Whether it is help getting on and off the train, buying tickets or finding out if there have been any important announcements, passenger assistance should have it covered. [National Rail's Information for disabled passengers](#) page has some advice to make your train journey as pleasant as possible. For a list of other handy [travel tips check out Disability Onboard](#)—a useful resource for all things accessible when travelling by train.

If you are registered deaf or use a hearing aid, you are eligible for a [Disabled Persons Railcard](#). At just £20 per year (as of February 2016), these cards give you a third off standard, first class, off-peak and advance fares anytime for you and a companion.

### Ship ahoy: holiday cruise options

If you want to venture off to exotic places but you don't want to deal with airports or train stations, cruise ships could be a great option. You'll be covered by EU regulations in terms of your rights as a person with hearing loss, which means you can't be charged more or denied service; you'll also be entitled to assistance if you need it.

Many cruises offer safety oriented kits in cabins to customers with hearing loss. Alert systems—door alarms, smoke detectors, clocks and even vibrating pillows—make sure you don't miss any important information or activities. Amenities throughout the ship could include assisted listening devices like TTY/TDD equipment, loop systems, sign language interpreters (especially for theatre performances), and more.

As with other modes of travel, your best bet is to alert the cruise operator of your needs at least 48 hours in advance. And yes, your hearing dog is welcome to join you, as long as you follow the rules on the GOV.UK page, [Pet travel: entering and returning to the UK](#).

### Buses: back in vogue

The bus business is experiencing a boom these days, perhaps due to attractive fares and schedules. In terms of relaying information, buses have become more user-friendly with their electronic signs (displaying bus arrivals updated in real time) and text or NGT enabled information telephone lines. Hearing loops are also installed at most bus information offices.

If you have a question for the driver, don't be afraid to ask. Many drivers are specially trained to assist hearing impaired passengers; even if you have to repeat yourself, go ahead and request help if you need it.

If you receive a state pension or are severely deaf, you may be eligible for a free bus pass—check with your local Council to find out. At the very least, you are entitled to a free off-peak pass on any bus, which allows you to travel anywhere in England between 9.30 am and 11 pm Monday to Friday and anytime at weekends. "Some local authorities also offer free bus passes to companions of disabled passengers, but this is at their discretion and something that they are not obliged to do", according to the article, ["Bus Travel for Deaf or Hearing Impaired", from the Disabled Travel Advice website](#).

Currently, buses and trains will have priority seating for older and disabled people. All transport vehicles must accept guide dogs and assistance dogs as well.

In the future, all public transport buses will have to meet specific disability standards set by the

government. As we wait patiently for this special day, we will have to make do with the current provisions.

### Using public transport in London

Getting around in London by car is one thing, but using public transport is another. The good news is that there are many resources to help you tame the Tube and beat the buses.

### Transport for London

In addition to all of the traditional services offered through the Transport for London (TfL) website, there is an entire section [devoted to transport accessibility](#). For instance, did you know you could request staff assistance at all Tube, TfL Rail, Overground stations, boats, the Emirates Air Line and Victoria Coach Stations? You can get assistance from drivers on trams and buses (on DLR trains, look for a Passenger Service Agent).

[TfL also offers a travel support card that you can download](#) and use in order to let people know what assistance you may need. And for information on fares, [visit the 60+ London Oyster Card section of the TfL website](#).

### Transport for All

[Transport for All](#) (TfA) is an organisation that is working to make it just as easy for you to travel on public transport as it is for anyone else. Formerly Dial-A-Ride and Taxicard users (DaRT), TfA is a great place to find how public transport is becoming more accessible to everyone, and it covers:

- Underground
- Buses
- Trains
- DLR
- Tramlink
- Riverboats
- The Emirate Airline (Cable Car)
- Airports

TfA also has information on getting travel training or mentoring and tracking down items that have been lost on London's transport system.

In terms of door to door services, TfA can help you research the following:

- Dial-a-Ride
- Capital Call
- Community transport
- Patient transport
- Taxicard
- Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle

The organisation can also help you explore the following concessionary services:

- Blue Badge
- Freedom Pass
- Disabled and Older Persons Railcard
- National Express Coachcard
- 60+ Oystercard

### Freedom Pass

To find out specifically about Freedom Passes, visit the [London Councils Freedom Pass website](#).

### Entertainment, culture and leisure

When going to the cinema, the theatre or a concert, try to pre-book the best seats for watching, listening and using the hearing loop or infrared system. Ask which seats have the best coverage for the loop or infrared system when booking. Loops will be helpful in public areas like lobbies (remember to switch to the loop setting!), and infrared systems are better during the actual showing or performance.

#### At the movies

Almost all cinemas regularly show films that have on-screen subtitles. Subtitled screenings will be listed as ST, subtitled or captioned.

[To find out if a theatre near you offers subtitle service, visit YourLocalCinema.com](#). You can also use the site to register for alerts regarding schedules for film releases and subtitled showings.

You can [apply for the Cinema Exhibitors' Association \(CEA\) card if you need support when going to the cinema](#). This lets you claim one free ticket for anyone accompanying you at participating cinemas. You will need to prove you receive benefits if you want to apply for the card.

#### At the theatre

Some theatres provide captioned performances placed near the stage, displays words at the same time as the actor speaks or sings them. In a signed performance, a sign language interpreter relays the speech and singing. The following organisations provide information on signed and captioned performances:

- [Stagetext captions](#) for theatre performances and other arts venues.
- [Signed Performances In Theatre \(SPIT\) provides BSL interpretations](#) at theatre performances.

#### Enjoying music

Living with hearing loss does not mean you can no longer enjoy attending concerts or listening to music. However, your experience with music might be different if you are wearing hearing aids since these devices could change the way music sounds.

If your hearing aid has an option for music (usually called a music programme), find out how you can switch it over to that setting when you'd like to use it. If you don't have this setting, ask your audiologist if it's possible to copy it. It may take a little bit of effort, but don't give up!

## Climbing with a sensory impairment

Because communication is an important part of safe climbing, there can be particular challenges for deaf climbers. There are, however, ways around this. You may not be able to lip read or sign when climbing, but a special code of rope tugs can enable you to keep in touch with climbing partners. The climbing centre will teach you this before you begin.

## Museums

Attending a museum can be a much more enjoyable experience if you have access to BSL or can have your communication needs met in other ways. Find out if the museum offers BSL trained guides who can take you on a tour. And if you're attending a discussion, class or another type of presentation at a museum, find out if subtitles or captioning will be offered. [The National Gallery offers a BSL multimedia tour](#) of its collection along with other services.

## Hearing loss: emotions and relationships

Living with a disability can have an impact on your emotional life. It can have an impact on the way you feel about yourself and those around you.

The physical limitations that you experience, as well as the attitudes of others towards your impairment, can sometimes be very frustrating. You may also experience feelings of isolation and loneliness, so having a good social and support network is vital.

## Emotional wellbeing

You may not make an immediate connection between hearing loss and emotional wellbeing, but it is indeed a loss; allowing yourself to come to terms with that loss is fundamental to your emotional wellbeing.

How you do this will depend on your general emotional wellbeing, as well as your existing social and support network. You may find that you're able to talk it through with family and friends, or you may find that counselling is best for you. What matters is that you stay well and balanced, and take steps to ensure that feelings of sadness or depression are handled with care. [The NHS Choices website has a helpful overview of counselling](#), which provides a good general overview.

## Counselling via your GP

Depending on where you live, you may be able to get counselling via your GP. If this is not available, you can ask your GP to refer you to a local organisation that may be able to help.

## Emotional support services

Action on Hearing Loss offers the services of a referrals coordinator who can help you to manage anxieties, stress, mental health or other issues that may be having an impact on your overall wellbeing. The coordinator will help you create a programme that will help you get on the way towards feeling good. To find out more, call 0333 240 5659, email [referrals@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:referrals@hearingloss.org.uk)

If you prefer to find emotional support tailored specifically for Jewish people, contact [Jewish Care](#)

[Direct at 0208 922 2222. The Jewish Helpline can also assist you. That number is 0800 652 9249.](#)

[For general emotional support any time of day or night, the Samaritans are there to help.](#)

### **Relationships with friends, family and colleagues**

Unless you have other disabilities or health conditions, you probably won't have great care needs because of your hearing impairment, but this doesn't mean that you don't need help or support in some of your daily activities. This support will usually come from friends, family and colleagues.

If you are fiercely independent, you may find asking for help quite difficult. But if you think of it as being in control of your dependencies, it can be quite a life changing experience. It is incredibly liberating to be okay with asking people around you to help.

Relationships, in general, are pretty complicated, so understanding and being in control of your needs ensures that having a hearing impairment does not make your relationships any more so.

