

7th April 2008

Dear Sir ,

As a lipreader with a severe to profound hearing loss I gained a great deal from attending a lipreading class 15 years ago. The Lipreading class restored my self confidence and I am now a qualified lipreading tutor and Deaf Awareness trainer , working for Deaf Action in Edinburgh .

Both as a recipient and tutor of lipreading classes, I would like to say that the classes are very important for the 95% of deaf people who have acquired their hearing loss after acquiring speech , and for whom signing is not appropriate . This large group are a silent majority whose work, friends and family are all hearing people. They do not identify with the Deaf signing community as lipreading is a more appropriate form of communication for them within their hearing world.

The lipreading class benefits these people with acquired hearing loss by restoring their social confidence with communication by :

-practising and teaching lipreading skills

- teaching the maintenance of hearing aids and thus maximising their use and efficiency
- acknowledging many other support groups eg. RNID and Typetalk
- demonstrating special equipment and how to access it eg. to help hear the telephone, doorbell, smoke alarm, television etc.
- helping people mix and communicate with others who have similar problems , thus tackling the main feelings of isolation
- teaching coping strategies in everyday situations at work at home and leisure
- having information slots on related problems such as balance , tinnitus, vetigo and Menieres Disease

This enables people to re enter the spoken world around them and is the only continued support of its kind for educating and rehabilitating people with acquired hearing loss.

It is my experience over the past 14 years that people do not know where to turn for this help, and only a few manage to find out about classes, and are always amazed at the amount of appropriate help offered.

I therefore urge you to allow lipreading a much higher profile and recommend the following comments as regards the document .

P14 – Standard 1 – Accessing the service

I have found that my lipreading tutor has been of great help in dealing with problems relating to my hearing aid. Lipreading tutors should be referred to in this respect.

P15 – Standard 2 - 2aiii – criteria

I feel that lipreading should be specifically mentioned rather than grouped in with other agencies, as it is a very important part of the rehabilitation process.

P19 – 4ai – criteria

Again lipreading should be mentioned specifically rather than being grouped in with other agencies.

P25-26 - Standard 8 – communication support and collaborative working.

Lipreading should be specifically mentioned here.

P40 – Good information prior to and after assessment

I feel very strongly that when someone is referred by their GP to Audiology that they should be given information about local lipreading services at that time. There can be a long period of time where you are left without a hearing aid and without any other support or rehabilitation. A great loss of confidence can occur during this period. I would like to see closer links between GP's, Audiology departments and lipreading services.

P42 – Meeting specific communication/information needs

Deaf Awareness and Communication Training

I know that many lipreading tutors are qualified in both of the above and it would make sense to tap into these resources to train GP's and Audiology service personnel.

P51 – Factors for consideration in developing the IMP

Lipreading should be specifically mentioned here under options for rehabilitation.

P53 – Referral to other agencies and services

Again lipreading needs a specific mention and referrals need to be made at the time of the initial visit to the GP.

P55 - Achieving ongoing use and benefit from hearing aids

This is one of the most important benefits of attending a lipreading class. I know of many people who before attending a lipreading class had given up trying to use their hearing aids as no support was provided.

P70 – Support for patients

Lipreading needs to be specifically mentioned here.

P72 – Working together

I believe that if lipreading services worked together with both GP's and Audiology services then a much better rehabilitative service could be provided.

I have greatly benefited from attending a lipreading class and it has prevented me from losing my confidence and becoming socially isolated. Since attending classes, I have a greater feeling of control and self-assertion. Most people are unaware of exactly what happens within a lipreading class and the breadth of help and advice that a lipreading tutor can provide – it is not just about learning to lipread, it is a full rehabilitation service. I feel very strongly that lipreading is a big part of the rehabilitative process for people with a hearing loss and that it needs to be a bigger part of this document. I could only find 2 specific mentions of lipreading within the document and on both occasions they were at the end of a list of other agencies.

I trust my comments will be taken into account.

Yours sincerely