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Deaf Awareness - breaking down barriers

For Deaf Awareness week, Rob blogs about the barriers that the D/deaf community faces in everyday life and at work.

The aim of this year's Deaf Awareness Week is to promote greater awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by the D/deaf community in accessing communication and breaking down communication barriers preventing deaf people from fully participating in society.

The Deaf community often faces significant barriers to communication, leading to social isolation, limited employment opportunities, and reduced access to essential services. These barriers can include a lack of access to sign language interpreters, limited captioning in videos and online content, and a general lack of awareness of the communication needs of Deaf individuals.

From personal experience the first barrier the D/deaf community face is others talking for the community to which they do not belong and bringing a hearing privileged perception that believes communicating and listening through sign language, lip reading or captioning is easy.

It takes D/deaf people nearly four times as much energy to follow and understand a conversation than a hearing person – this is known as D/deaf fatigue.

The hard of hearing are too often classed as not being deaf when their hearing loss is such that they face the same challenges of the Deaf community.

[Read the British Deaf Association's factsheet on definitions of deafness and terminology.](#)

In the civil service working environment, for those of us who access sign language, the change in [Access to Work](#) provision through employing departments is problematic. Many departments do not have agreed policies and processes to employee interpreters which was previously straightforward under DWP. Personally, the challenge over funding interpreter support within my

department, the MOD, caused me a great deal of anxiety and sleepless nights.

If I was to sum up the communication barriers my community faces, they would be exclusionary communication, policies that do not ensure support in the workplace, and people outside of the D/deaf community making assumptions and decisions on our behalf.

If you do need support as mentioned in this article, please speak with your local rep. If you don't know who that is, you will find their details by logging onto [PCS Digital](#).