

## HOW TO UNDERSTAND CONVERSATION BETTER IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING HEARING DIFFICULTIES

When someone speaks, clues are gained from what we see. **YOU** may be able to create a situation so that as many clues as possible are available.

### THE BEST CONDITIONS FOR LISTENING

1. A room with soft furnishings (such as carpets, curtains, cushions – these absorb sound and so reduce the echo effect).
2. Try to reduce background noise (A tablecloth may lessen the noise of plates clattering, for example).
3. Ask others to face you, to speak clearly and a little louder (mumbling and shouting make it more difficult for you to pick out the words of the speaker).

**Remember that noisy places such as busy streets, large shops, hospitals and railway stations will be rather more difficult to communicate in because of very loud background noise. The best way to understand conversation is to: -**

- a) Don't be afraid to tell people that you have difficulty in hearing.
- b) Make sure the room is well lit.
- c) Have your back to the light source e.g. window, so that the light falls on the speaker's face.
- d) Position yourself 3-6 ft away, as lip reading is difficult if the speaker is too near or too far.
- e) Make sure your eyesight has recently been checked, as you don't want to strain your eyes.
- f) Try to watch the speaker's lips (you may be surprised at the number of clues you pick up without realising it).
- g) Do not let yourself get too tired or tense, as you will be able to lip-read better if you are relaxed.
- h) Do not be afraid to let people know you have to rely on lip-reading and give them an idea of how they can help you.
- i) By facing you and keeping their head fairly still.
- j) By keeping their mouth visible and not hiding the lip movements behind their hands, a cigarette or pipe.
- k) By not shouting but speaking clearly and not too fast (shouting alters the lip pattern and speaking too slowly may destroy the natural rhythm of speech).
- l) By attracting your attention before speaking so that you can catch the beginning of what is being said – not just the end.
- m) By not distracting your attention with unnecessary hand movements.
- n) By removing their sunglasses before they speak to you, as frequently a lot of understanding of speech is through the eyes, and dark glasses make it very difficult to observe an expression in a person's eyes.
- o) By making the subject of conversation as clear as possible.
- p) By repeating some thing you haven't grasped, and then perhaps rephrasing what they want to say, as some words are more difficult to lip-read.