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Visits4u online Module on D/deaf Awareness - Transcript

Opening:

Welcome to this Visits4U training course. This module is on Deaf Awareness, it has been designed by the Centre for Accessible Environments.

The Visits4U project was an 18 month programme of capacity building in inclusive tourism.

The project was co funded by the COSME programme of the European Union. COME stands for Competitiveness of small and medium sized enterprises.

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The sequence of this module is:

1. Hearing Impairments and hearing difference

2. Environments

3. Technology

4. Further Information

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Let's look first at Hearing Loss and Hearing difference:

Many of us experience hearing loss – in fact in the UK 55% of people over the age of 60 have hearing loss and the figures are no different across most parts of the world.

With hearing loss often comes associates sensitivity to certain frequencies, and sometimes balance is affected. Meniere's disease for example is a progressive condition affecting balance and hearing parts of the inner ear. It can cause severe bouts of dizziness, tinnitus, deafness and a feeling of pressure in the ear.

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Let's have a look at some statistics.....

In the UK, for example there are at least 11 million people with hearing loss today, and this figure will increase to early 16 million by 2035.

It has an increasing impact with age, just as balance conditions become more frequent as we age and are responsible for the higher number of falls in older people.

There are many hearing differences that are not caused by hearing loss or age – for example there are many people within the autistic spectrum who experience sensitivity to particular sounds in the environment and can be overstimulated and distressed by a noisy environment. One in 10 of us will experience tinnitus – noises just as ringing, buzzing, clicking throbbing sounds – it can be caused by medication, ear conditions and sometimes over exposure to loud noises.

Glue ear is a common condition during childhood and causes temporary hearing loss.

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Ageing Ear

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Hearing Loss – what helps:

Now let's take a look at some helpful adjustments to make life easier for people with hearing conditions:

A primary consideration is the presence of background noise, which will often make communication difficult.

Provide even lighting for lip reading and ensure signage and information is a clear format and adequate size.

See also our training module on wayfinding and signage.

The provision of live text information, such as mobile phones, text displays at transport terminals, often gives people with hearing loss easy

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access to information without the need to ask.

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Many people feel that lip reading is a good way of communication for people with hearing loss.

However, even for the best lip reader in the world, you are only likely to achieve 60% accuracy when lipreading. So what helps?

- Firstly, you should always directly face the person who is lipreading. Speak at your normal pace or just a fraction slower, don't try to over-annunciate your words differently as this will distort your lip pattern and make it harder to understand.
- Is there sufficient light for lipreading? Make sure you are facing the light so that your face can be clearly seen – and,
- don't forget to rephrase what you are saying if someone is struggling to understand.

Some people try to get by with a mix of words and gestures – gestures can sometimes be helpful, but sometimes it is necessary to write things down too (although not everyone with hearing loss will understand written English or written language).

You may have learnt finger spelling from an early age, (it only take a few minutes to learn) and that is fine for spelling out just one or two words – perhaps a name or address, but it would take a very long time to have a conversation.

Sign language is a developed language learned and used by some Deaf people fro a very early age – it is based on uniform gestures and can be their first or only language. There can be regional variations, and sign language in one country is certainly quite different to another, so knowing British Sign language for example may be of limited benefit when overseas.

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Using written form to communicate is often helpful and very common and

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there are a number of ways to do this –

From putting pen to paper when communicating on the spur of the moment

Or Sending short messages via text – either using a computer screen or between mobile phones

Emailing in advance

Or perhaps engaging a Palantypist for a particular event (a palantypist is a professional stenographer who types as someone speaks – in a conference for example, this could appear on a laptop or on a screen)

Stagetext works in a similar way at live theatre shows and the text usually appears above or below the stage.

Equally, subtitles are becoming more and more commonplace on our televisions and on everyday programmes, such as news broadcasts.

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Hearing enhancement systems

There are three common types of hearing enhancement system. These are designed to amplify the sound source and cut out background noise.

The cheapest and most common is the induction loop, there are small portable loop systems which are battery operated, and others which are hard wired, typically on a reception counter or in a meeting or performance space.

The radio system is very flexible as it has no wiring, but confidentiality can be an issue.

The infra red is the most confidential.

Why not have a look now at the Visits4U factsheet which will tell you more about hearing enhancement systems.

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Let's have a look at some other technology apart from Hearing enhancement systems:

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Firstly if you have a visual display that means someone does not have to rely on hearing or the ability to ask for information- The smallest thing, such as a till display that tells you the price of something, text information on public transport or a visual light to indicate that someone has answered an intercom are examples of technology that can help someone with hearing loss.

There are several items that are important in planning for emergencies such as fire evacuation – especially where people may be isolated or separated from others and especially in sleeping accommodation. Visual fire alerts are welcomed, typically a flashing beacon in addition to an audible alarm. In sleeping accommodation, this should be supplemented with under pillow or mattress alerts.

When you have finished this module, have a look at our factsheet for hotels and accommodation providers.

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External environments and spaces - what are the issues:

Firstly, hearing danger approaching – for example it may not be possible to hear vehicles approaching (especially quiet electric cars).

People with hearing loss can be surprisingly more susceptible to trips and falls – this could be due to sensory overload or balance difficulties – it is certaintly difficult to lip read whilst moving around as navigating the environment and lipreading both require visual concentration

Are there places where someone can go for a little peace and quiet?

Understanding crowd management instructions in busy places such as crowded stations, performances and events, can become a real issue.

So what helps in external spaces

- Clear signage so that there is less need to ask

- Clear demarcation of kerb edges, etc.

- Understandable environments – surface finishes, sightlines

- Building frontages that can offer some support – perhaps some

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shelter or quiet space.

- Choices – alternative routes? Havens? Pocket parks, recessed areas which will provide a haven for people who are distressed by the environment.

- Keeping vehicles and people segregated as far as possible

- Controlled crossings with tactile indicators and count down – these are very helpful but not available everyone across Europe

- Good street lighting is helpful for lip-reading

- Wider paths are helpful for lip reading and navigation

- Keeping obstructions off the line of travel – street furniture, A-boards: street furniture should not be situated across the pavement but kept in alignment and not create too much clutter.   A boards in particular need controlling.

None of these measures have a negative impact on other users, so should be considered.

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The last section will look at steps you can take straight away.

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Put into practice what you have learned from this module, do a walk around and check your spaces. You can then commission a comprehensive audit, if need be, to give you an idea of how accessible your spaces are – be sure to use a qualified professional.

Make your website more user friendly by looking at things like good colour contrast, size of text and clear information on any access provisions you have regarding your facilities and services. It's important that you don't make assumptions on the needs of a potential guest.

Train your staff – Attitude is everything. A happy customer will tell a friend, an unhappy one will tell the world.

See what other hotels and businesses around you are doing; make use of these practices and use them as reference points.

Work with disability organisations to increase your understanding and awareness of the needs of people with different types of disabilities. This links to training your staff.

It is good to know what you are doing right and where you can improve so always ask for customer feedback.

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You have now completed this module.

You can find useful documents on the project website, please follow the link provided on this slide:
http://www.visits4u.eu/visits4u-access-guide/

Also remember, this is part of a series of three modules and these are currently available on project website:
http://www.visits4u.eu/online-course/

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Thank you and good luck on your journey!

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