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Case Study

David Ewens – Severe hearing loss

Live referencing

David is employed in a senior role within the education sector and has severe hearing loss. To support him in his role as a Development Officer for NIACE David has used electronic note-takers for over two years.

He has found electronic note-takers have enabled him to gain access to and participate in a range of events including internal and external meetings, conferences, workshops, training courses, and governor and board of trustee meetings. Electronic note-takers provide David with a live record of what is being said and by whom. This has enabled him to clearly identify speakers and information, undertake networking with colleagues and contribute his own comments and views. This type of language support has revolutionised his working life, taking away much stress and pressure and removing concern that he might misunderstand people. He can feel more relaxed within professional settings.

“I have been deaf since birth, as have my two brothers. This severe hearing loss has made aspects of my life difficult but at the same time a degree of ‘over-compensation’ fostered by committed and determined parenting has lessened the effects of the impairment. However, now that I am older and at the other end of my working life, severe hearing loss is becoming profound.

I would not have been able to carry on working without the electronic note-takers who support me in such a dedicated fashion. They are often under real pressure, but they work patiently, professionally and always in good humour. The transformation has been extraordinary. For the first time ever, I have been able to participate fully in meetings and other similar activities without pretending, guessing and getting things plain wrong. It has increased my confidence and therefore my competence, and has made me feel that I am making a valued contribution. Interestingly, it sometimes makes me cross, too. Why did I not have such support during my education and early working life? How much more might I have achieved!

I also believe that working with electronic note-takers sends a strong, inclusive signal to colleagues within my organisation and outside. It helps to show what is possible for disabled people. I am grateful to all the electronic note-takers. They help me participate, make a decent, independent living and above all, make a difference”.