

# atla

Association of Teachers  
of Lipreading to Adults

# ACTION ON HEARING LOSS

# CAMPAIGNING FOR LIPREADING CLASSES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

A guide for people with hearing loss



**Across England, millions of people with hearing loss don't have access to a lipreading class – and many existing classes are facing closure.**

**You can help to change this.**

Lipreading is the ability to read people's lip shapes to identify the words being spoken. It's a vital communication skill for many people with hearing loss, which helps them to stay in work, live a full social life, and avoid the isolation that often comes with hearing loss.

There's a limit to how much people can improve their lipreading skills on their own, so it's important that people with hearing loss have access to lipreading classes, run by qualified lipreading teachers. As well as teaching lipreading, the classes cover communication tips, useful equipment and other local services. They also give people the chance to share experiences and coping strategies with others with hearing loss.

Our research shows that lipreading classes give people with hearing loss greater confidence, control and independence when communicating with others.

The problem is that very few people in England attend a lipreading class. In some areas, it's a case of people not knowing what lipreading is or that classes exist, meaning there's a lack of demand. This puts existing classes at risk of closure.

Elsewhere, lipreading classes are simply not available. This is partly due to the fact that, in England, lipreading classes are funded out of the Community Learning budget and have to compete for funding alongside classes such as floristry and cookery. Therefore, the amount of funding available for colleges to provide lipreading classes is limited. This has led to a further decline of the availability of classes and a rise in course fees, which, in turn, has prevented people from joining classes.

## TAKE ACTION!

**We need your help to improve the availability of lipreading classes in England – so you and your community can benefit.**

In this guide we give you the information and tools so that you can:

- campaign for a lipreading class in your area
- campaign to stop your lipreading class fees rising
- campaign to stop your lipreading class being closed down.

To find out if there's a lipreading class in your area, go to the Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA) website: [www.atlalipreading.org.uk](http://www.atlalipreading.org.uk) or email [info@atalipreading.org.uk](mailto:info@atalipreading.org.uk)

# HOW TO CAMPAIGN FOR A LIPREADING CLASS IN YOUR AREA

If there isn't a lipreading class in your community, follow our tips:

**1. Write to your local college, or your council's adult education service, and explain the benefits that a lipreading class could bring to your community.** Ask them to make a lipreading class available at little or no cost to the learner. If they say they can't offer a class for free, ask for a clear reason why. See page 7 for our letter-writing tips, and download a template letter that you can customise at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign)

**2. Find local people who also want to learn to lipread – the greater the local demand, the greater the pressure will be for a class to be provided.** Local colleges will only provide courses where there is clear demand, as they must take account of local need. Try visiting any local hearing loss support groups that may exist, to raise awareness of how lipreading can help and to gather support for a class in your area. You can use the form at the end of this guide to record the details of people who are interested in learning to lipread.

**3. Let us know that you're gathering local support, so we can tell our colleagues working in your area – they may be able to support you and help spread the word.** Contact the Action on Hearing Loss Information Line to let us know that you're campaigning for a local class (see last page for details).

**4. Check if there's a registered teacher who could run the class in your area.** To do this, contact the Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA – see last page for details). If there aren't any teachers available, write to your local college or your council's adult education service to ask if they will sponsor a local person to be trained as a teacher.

**5. Write to the editor of your local newspaper.** Ask the editor to publish your letter or email in the newspaper to generate interest and support for a local lipreading class. See our tips for what to include in this letter on page 8.

While campaigning for a lipreading class in your area, you can practise your lipreading skills by doing the exercises on the Lipreading Practice website: [www.lipreadingpractice.co.uk](http://www.lipreadingpractice.co.uk)



## SUCCESS STORY



Local campaigner Andy Griffin campaigned successfully with Action on Hearing Loss to convince Northumberland Education Authority that lipreading classes were essential. As a result, a lipreading class was set up in Northumberland and Andy has been attending – and benefitting – for over a year.

“I can say without question my communication skills have improved, along with my confidence. The other learners in my class all agree that they have learnt so much from the sessions. Apart from the fun and reassurance of being with friends who share hearing difficulties, there is no doubt that the lipreading class has made an enormous difference to our lives.”

*Andy Griffin*

## HOW TO CAMPAIGN TO STOP YOUR LIPREADING CLASS FEES INCREASING

If you attend a class but there's a risk that the fees may rise, here's what you can do:

### 1. Write to your local college or your council's adult education service.

Tell them the situation and emphasise the benefits that the class has for you. Make it clear that you want them to make sure the class continues at little or no cost to the learner – and if they can't do this, they must provide a clear reason why. See our letter-writing tips on page 7 and download a template letter that you can customise at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign)

**2. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to raise awareness of the issue.** There are tips for this on page 8.

**3. If you don't get anywhere with your council's adult education service, have a think about other potential sources of funding.** See our success story on page 6 for inspiration!

# HOW TO CAMPAIGN TO STOP A CLASS BEING CLOSED DOWN

If you, or someone you know, is attending a class that may be at risk of closure, follow these tips:

**1. Write to your local college, your council's adult education service and local groups that may be able to support you.** Explain the situation and emphasise the benefits that attending a lipreading class has for you and others. Make it clear that you want them to make sure that the class continues at little or no cost to the learner – and if they can't do this, ask them to provide a clear reason why. If the issue is low enrolment, tell them that they have a responsibility to promote the class locally so more people are aware of the opportunity to learn new skills. Information about the class should be included in the existing promotional materials that the adult education service and local college produce about the courses they offer. The class should also be advertised in audiology and GP services, and other places such as local libraries, community centres or the gym. See our letter-writing tips on page 7 and our template letters that you can download and customise at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign)

**2. If enrolment numbers are low, try to find local people who also want to learn to lipread.** The greater the local demand, the greater the pressure will be for a class to be provided. You could visit any hearing loss support groups that exist in your area, to raise

awareness of how lipreading classes can help. You'll need to explain the purpose of classes, the benefits, and how much of a difference they can make to a person's life. People won't know why they should be interested in lipreading unless they understand the benefit that it brings or the value that it has. You can use the form at the end of this guide to collect the details of people who are interested in learning to lipread.

**3. Let us know that you're gathering local support, so we can tell our local colleagues.** They may be able to support you and help spread the word. Contact the Action on Hearing Loss Information Line to let us know that you're trying to save a local class (see last page for contact details).

**4. If the class needs a new teacher, for instance if the current teacher is retiring, check if there's a teacher registered who could teach the class.** To do this, contact the Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA – see last page for details). If there aren't any teachers available in your area, write to your local college or your council's adult education service to ask if they will sponsor a local person to be trained as a teacher.

**5. Write to the editor of your local newspaper.** Ask the editor to publish your letter or email in the newspaper to raise awareness of the situation and gain support for your campaign. See page 8 for our letter-writing tips.

## SUCCESS STORY

Middlesbrough Deaf Centre's lipreading class was saved from closure after Action on Hearing Loss supported Middlesbrough Council to secure public health funding to keep it running for free.

The lipreading class at Middlesbrough Deaf Centre had been running for several years at no cost to the learner. However, in April 2013, fees were introduced by the local adult education service at £40 per learner per term - this was manageable for the majority of learners.

Then, in September 2013, the adult education service announced that the class fees would increase to £80 per term, to bring the course fees in line with other courses that they offered. This increase in fees made the class unaffordable for many people who would benefit from it, and nobody enrolled on to the course beginning that September.

The adult education service decided to use alternative funding within their budget to put on a free 'Introduction to lipreading' course that term, to generate interest in lipreading. Introduction classes are offered to encourage people to sign up to the full course at a future time, but they can't be repeated or used as a substitute for a full course. The service needed to find additional funding to cover the cost of the lipreading class, or else it wouldn't have been able to continue.



Having recognised the need for lipreading classes, the Head of Business Development and Service Provision at Middlesbrough Council applied directly to the Director of Public Health within Middlesbrough Council for public health funding for the continuation of various services held in the deaf centre, including lipreading classes. He successfully used the Action on Hearing Loss lipreading research report *Not just lip service* to make the case for the importance of providing lipreading classes for people with hearing loss.

You can download a copy of *Not just lipservice* at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/notjustlipservice](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/notjustlipservice)

"I know that a lot of people wouldn't have been able to afford the class if the fees would have gone up, and it would have been a shame because the lipreading class has helped a great deal."

**Marjorie Templeman,  
who attended the  
lipreading class for  
three years**



## LETTER-WRITING TIPS

As you write your own letters and emails, encourage other local people to do the same. You could even organise a letter-writing social event, like a coffee morning.

### Writing to those who have local influence on the issue

As well as writing directly to your local college or council's adult education service, you can also write to those who have local influence on the decisions they make, such as your local MP or councillor. You can download a template letter to customise at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign)

Here's our step-by-step guide to writing an effective letter or email:

#### 1. Find the right contact

Do a bit of research to find the right contact at your local college or council. The local council website will usually have contact details for adult learning managers and councillors. If they don't, contact the council and ask who you need to get in touch with. Start your letter with your reason for writing.

#### 2. Describe the problem

Explain the situation, how it has affected you and how you feel about it. For example, you may have been attending a lipreading class (or would like to), but are currently unable to, and this has led to you feeling more socially isolated. Make it personal – your letter will have a much bigger impact if you use your own experiences and give the issue a human face.

#### 3. Stress what should be available to you

Stress that colleges and training providers are required to respond to the needs of local learners, employers and communities, where courses are required that will help people into employment. Every college or training provider that receives public funding should consider offering lipreading classes if there is a demand for them locally.

#### 4. Specify what you want

Make it clear what you're asking for. For example, if you're writing to an elected official, make it clear that you want them to write to your council about lipreading classes. If you're writing to your council or college, make it clear that you want them to make classes available at little or no cost to the learner – and, if they can't do this, to give a clear reason why. You could also ask to meet with them to discuss the issue in more detail.

#### 5. Encourage them to contact us

Let them know that you have told Action on Hearing Loss and the Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA) about the situation, and encourage them to contact us. It may take a while for them to get an answer to you – if you've not heard anything from them after a few weeks, write to them again. Persistence pays off!

## Writing to your local newspaper

Another way to campaign for change if you have a problem accessing a lipreading class is by writing a letter or email to the editor of your local newspaper. Editors may not publish every letter they receive, but they do pay attention to these letters, especially well-written ones.

No matter how small the paper's circulation, having your letter published will help to raise awareness of lipreading as a skill and of the issue. If the editor feels it is an important local issue, and receives a number of letters on the subject from different readers, they may want to write a feature.

If you've had a particularly good experience of a lipreading class, please write to the editors about that, too.

Here's our step-by-step guide to writing to your local newspaper:

### 1. Do some research

Read some of the letters already printed in the newspaper to get a feel for the tone. Start with the editor's name and address, and the reason you're writing.

### 2. Describe the problem

Explain the situation, how it has affected you and how you feel about it. For example, you may have been attending a class (or would like to), but are currently unable to and this has led to you feeling more socially isolated. Make it personal – your letter will have a much bigger impact if you use your own experiences and give the issue a human face. It's worth adding specific details of the ways in which you are isolated by your hearing loss; you could mention specific situations (such as family events) that you could have enjoyed more and participated in by lipreading.

### 3. Suggesting further coverage

Your personal experience may also encourage the editor to include a longer feature on the subject – especially if you remind them how prevalent hearing loss is (it affects one in six people). Many of the newspaper's readers are likely to be affected by hearing loss, so it's possible that they may want to cover the issue in more depth.

### 4. Describe what you hope will change

End your letter by briefly setting out what you hope will change and how this will benefit your community.

## SAMPLE LETTERS



We've produced a range of template letters for you to download and customise, to help you campaign to start a lipreading class, stop class fees rising, or prevent your class from closing. Some of the sample letters are written for you to send to your MP, such as the example we've included on page 9, and others are intended for your local college or the adult education service of your council.

You can download the full range of letters at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign)

Make the letter your own by customising the **pink text**.

## Template letter to your MP: for use if there are no lipreading classes in your area

With this letter, you are asking your MP to support your campaign for a local lipreading class and ask the relevant council cabinet members to address the issue. You can find out who your MP is at [www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps](http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps)

[Name] MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

[Your name and address]

[Date]

Dear [Name] MP,

I am writing to seek your help and support in securing the provision of local lipreading classes for people, like myself, who are learning to live with hearing loss.

Lipreading is a vital communication skill for people who are deaf or have hearing loss that can help to tackle isolation. It is widely recognised that lipreading can help people of all ages with any degree of hearing loss to communicate better. These skills are taught at lipreading classes, which are designed to give pupils the confidence and skills to positively tackle the isolation experienced by people with hearing loss.

Lipreading classes, which are taught by qualified teachers in an informal and friendly manner, also help people learn to cope with their hearing loss by giving them the opportunity to share experiences and coping strategies with others in similar situations.

[Insert your personal experience - how will learning to lipread help you? What is it that you want to get from a lipreading class?]

However, the provision of lipreading classes across the country is highly inconsistent and many people struggle to access this important part of the patient pathway and rehabilitation process for hearing loss. Indeed, there are no lipreading classes provided in [your area].

I am therefore asking for your help in doing whatever you can to support the provision of a local lipreading class. I would be grateful if you could write to the local council cabinet members responsible for adult skills and ask them what they can do to ensure that local people, like me, can access this important service and gain the skills that will allow us to adjust to hearing loss.

If you would like further information on the benefits of lipreading classes or the way in which they are funded nationally by central government, please contact Action on Hearing Loss (call 020 7296 8012 or email [campaigns@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@hearingloss.org.uk)) or the Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (email [info@atlalipreading.org.uk](mailto:info@atlalipreading.org.uk))

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

## Recording local demand

**The purpose of this form is to capture details of local people who are interested in learning to lipread, to show local providers that there is a demand for a class.**

If you have hearing loss, learning to lipread can help you to understand speech and join in conversations. A lipreading class will not only improve your lipreading skills, it will also support you to manage your hearing loss by providing useful information about local services, equipment and communication strategies.

Unfortunately, we do not have a local lipreading class.

By providing your contact details below, you are expressing an interest in potentially attending a lipreading class, if one was available locally at an affordable cost.

This form will be shared with our local education provider in order to demonstrate that there is a local need for a lipreading class.

NAME	ADDRESS

You can download further copies of this form at [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/LipreadingCampaign)

**Action on Hearing Loss** helps people confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss to live the life they choose. We enable them to take control of their lives and remove the barriers in their way.

To find out more about what we do and how you can support us, visit [www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

### **Action on Hearing Loss Information Line**

Telephone **0808 808 0123**

Textphone **0808 808 9000**

SMS **0780 000 0360**

Email [information@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:information@hearingloss.org.uk)

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### **The Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA)**

provides a professional and recognised association for teachers of lipreading to adults, and works in partnership with others to ensure that everyone challenged by hearing loss has access to lipreading classes and appropriate support.

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