



## National Deaf Mental Health Service, Birmingham (NDMHS)

### *Tactics for Good Communication*

- ☀ Use a qualified BSL (British Sign Language) Interpreter
- ✳ Always face the Service User, talk directly to them, not to the Interpreter.
- ☀ Speak clearly and naturally.
- ☀ Keep your mouth visible.
- ✳ Use straightforward language and sentences.
- ☀ Use appropriate facial expressions.
- ☀ Repeat things if necessary.
- ✳ Try different words – rephrase.
- ☀ Make sure background noise is kept to a minimum.
- ☀ Lighting of room, check with Service User and Interpreter where everyone should sit.
- ✳ Avoid suggestion, such as ‘do you hear voices’. Find their language of their experience and encourage them to describe their experience and feelings.
- ☀ Be aware that it is easy to misinterpret odd ideas or strange beliefs as delusional, when this can arise from concrete thinking or the person’s historical misunderstanding due to lack of access to full information.
- ☀ Clarify timelines – Deaf people generally talk in the present tense. For example, ‘yesterday’ could mean yesterday or many years ago.
- ✳ Use visual references where possible, such as a calendar, to support clarification