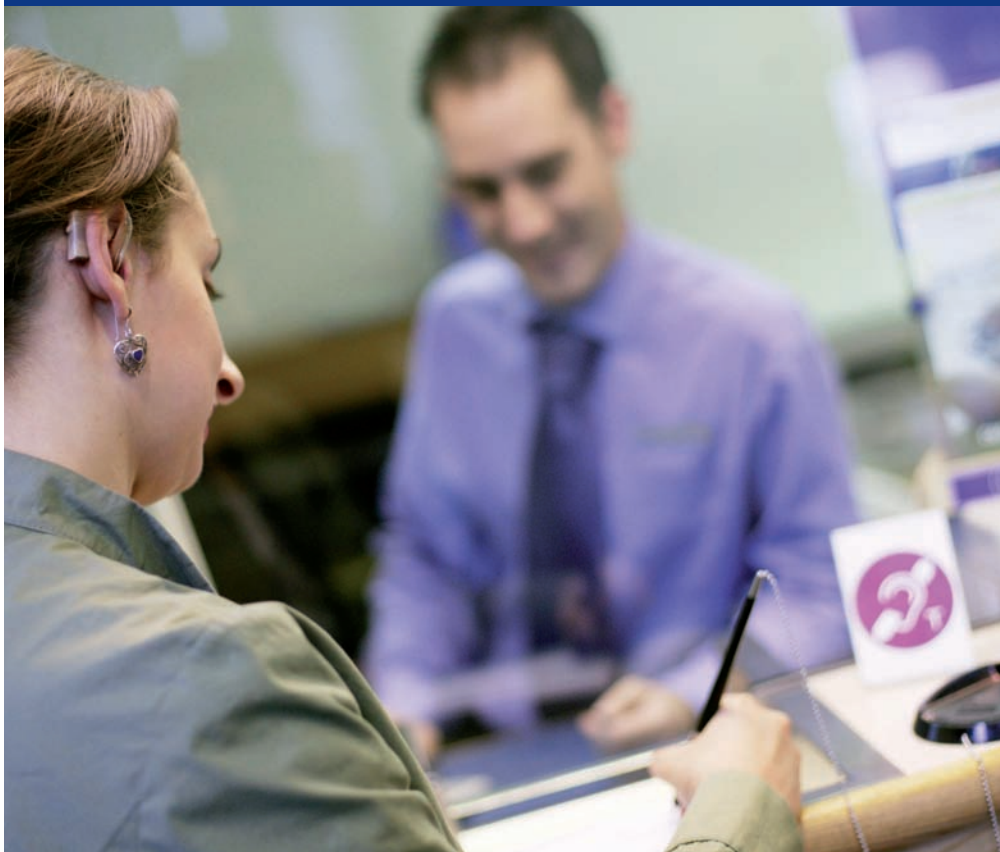


Loop systems: A guide to best practice



RNID • 

Changing the world for deaf
and hard of hearing people



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About this guide

This is a guide for employers, service providers and businesses, which explains best practice in relation to induction loops.

Topics covered in this guide include how loop systems work, how to look after them and how to make your business more accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Did you know?

There are around 9 million people in the UK who are deaf or hard of hearing, many of whom wear hearing aids. If you own, manage, or provide a service, you have a legal duty to ensure that your service is accessible to people with disabilities.

Financially, it also makes sense to be accessible – the one in seven people in the UK who are deaf or hard of hearing are your potential customers, worth around £4 billion a year.

Background

What are induction loops?

An audio frequency induction loop (AFIL) is equipment that is used to make communication easier for hearing aid wearers. It provides a magnetic signal that is picked up by a hearing aid when this is set to its 'T' (Telecoil) setting.

How do induction loops work?

A loop system will have: a microphone/s, to capture the spoken word; an induction loop amplifier, to process the audio signal, which is then output through the final piece; the loop cable, around the perimeter of a specific area to act as an aerial to radiate the magnetic signal to the hearing aid.

When a hearing aid user selects the 'T' setting, he or she can pick up sounds spoken into the loop system microphone instead of the hearing aid's internal microphone.

Who benefits from induction loops?

People who are deaf or hard of hearing may find it difficult to hear the spoken word in places where there is high ambient noise or poor room acoustics. This can include: shops, supermarkets, banks, Post Offices, cinemas, theatres, meeting rooms and many other venues. A correctly installed loop system can help overcome these problems.



Why should I provide induction loops?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 states that you must make 'reasonable adjustments' so that your service is accessible. Without making these changes, you may be discriminating against disabled people, and you could face legal action.



“Lloyds TSB is proud to provide a service accessible to hearing aid wearers. Having induction loops helps to ensure our customers get the most from our services and it’s not only our existing customers who benefit. It also means we can promote our branch service with confidence to 9 million potential new customers.”

Ken Lamport, Retail Standards Manager at Lloyds TSB

Best practice

Where can I buy induction loops?

You can buy induction loops from a number of suppliers in the UK, including RNID Products. When you select an installer, be sure to confirm that they will install the system to conform to the British Standard Code of Practice for Audio Frequency Loop Systems BS 7594. This will ensure that the most suitable loop system is installed and that it is designed to professional standards.

How will my loops be installed?

Before a loop system is installed, the installer will carry out a site survey. This will include testing the site for magnetic background noise, because electrical equipment and mains wiring can interfere with hearing aids on the T setting. The installer will also need to determine the area that needs to be covered and whether any surrounding metal surfaces might affect the looped area.

If you are installing more than one loop, you will need to ensure their signals don't overlap. Your installer will be able to advise on this.

Finally, the type and positioning of the microphone needs to be considered. If the microphone is too far away from the person speaking, this could adversely affect the overall performance of the loop system.



How many induction loops do I need?

This depends on the service you provide. Within an office or similar environment, you should have an induction loop in these locations:

- Reception
- 25% of meeting rooms
- 50% of booths or interview rooms
- There should also be a portable loop for use in rooms without a built in system and for any outreach work you perform
- Any other relevant points – for example, if an intercom is used to access your premises, an induction loop should be fitted here also.

Within a shop, supermarket, bank, Post Office or similar, there should be loops at these locations:

- Each customer-facing point – counters, customer service and information points, desks, etc
- Between 50-100% of tills or checkouts (depending on the layout of the building). Where an ‘above counter loop’ is used, all points can be covered
- There should also be a portable loop in other locations and for any outreach work you perform.

How do I let users know where induction loops are?

It is important to let hearing aid wearers know if a loop is installed and where it is located. As part of the installation, your installer will provide one or more standard ‘T’ loop signs. This should be set apart from other signage, and should be very visible.

In the case of a reception area, the sign must be placed at the point where the loop equipment is effective. In the case of a meeting room, the loop sign should be placed at the entrance of the room, inside the room and also clear indications should be made where the equipment can be switched on.

How do I look after induction loops?

Induction loop systems need regular maintenance to ensure they are functioning properly, just like any other electronic equipment. It is not acceptable to rely on customers reporting problems with loops – you must be proactive in ensuring systems are fully functioning at all times. To make sure you are providing an accessible service, induction loops should be checked monthly.

Your installer may provide you with a 'personal listener', which allows a non-hearing aid wearer to access the induction loop. This is useful for periodic testing of the equipment. The checks should be performed by an appropriate person, and the results should be recorded for audit purposes. An annual check should also be performed by your supplier, ensuring it is tested to IEC 60118-4 standard.

What else do I need to do?

As well as having induction loops fitted and regularly maintained, it is vital that staff, including new employees, are aware that a loop system is fitted, its function and how to use it. Without staff being trained in this way, customers and service users will find your service very difficult to use. This should also extend to deaf awareness training for all staff. A 'personal listener', for example, as mentioned earlier in this guide, will allow staff to experience the loop system in a similar way to a hearing aid wearer.



Next steps

How can I make my business even more accessible?

RNID's Louder than Words charter is an easy way to demonstrate that you provide the best possible service to customers and staff who are deaf or hard of hearing. You can achieve this charter by fulfilling 10 simple steps within your business.

For more information about Louder than Words,

go to **www.rnid.org.uk/ltw**
telephone **0161 276 2312/2311**
textphone **0161 276 2316**
e-mail **training.services@rnid.org.uk**

or write to:

RNID Training Services

Aeroworks

5 Adair Street

Manchester

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Summing up

In short, these are the important points to remember:

- Induction loops are vital to ensure accessibility for hearing aid wearers.
- Increasing access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to your business or service can increase your revenue stream.
- Induction loops should be installed at all customer facing points, 25% of meeting rooms, 50% of booths or interview rooms, and portable loops should be provided for outreach work.
- Induction loops should be checked on a monthly basis, with annual checks by a qualified supplier.
- Train your staff about the need for, function and usage of induction loops.
- Show your commitment to best practice and accessibility by gaining RNID's Louder than Words charter.

Where can I find out more?

For more information or advice about induction loops, deaf awareness, or any issue relating to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, visit our website **www.rnid.org.uk** or see our contact details on the back page.

We're RNID, the charity working to change the world for the UK's 9 million people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

There are a number of ways
to support us. To find out more:

Go to

www.rnid.org.uk

Contact our Information Line

Telephone 0808 808 0123

Textphone 0808 808 9000

Or write to us

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