

Hearing loops:
a guide for services

ACTION ON
HEARING
LOSS

INACCESSIBLE?

Hearing loops: a guide for services

“Managers of shops, banks and even cinemas do not seem to realise that if a hearing loop system is working well, it gives hearing aid wearers amazingly clear hearing as well as getting rid of background noise!”

Richard Scullard, Hearing aid wearer, Bristol

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for employers, service providers and businesses. It explains best practice in relation to induction loops. Topics covered include:

- what induction loops are
- why you should consider providing induction loops
- how to look after induction loop systems.

Why should I make my service accessible?

There are about 10 million people in the UK who have hearing loss, many of whom wear hearing aids. Good induction loops can attract hearing aid wearers to your service, so are well worth installing.

Financially, it also makes sense to be accessible – the one in six people in the UK who have hearing loss are your potential customers, worth around £4 billion a year.

What are induction loops?

Hearing (induction) loops help people with hearing loss to hear sounds more clearly by reducing the effect of background noise. For example, in a shop, or bank loops help people hear staff more clearly. In the theatre, loops can help people hear performances more clearly.

A hearing loop is a piece of equipment that allows a hearing aid wearer to hear more clearly

When a staff member speaks into that microphone, sound is transmitted as a magnetic field which can be picked up by hearing aids when set to the ‘T’ setting or hearing loop program. This applies to different types of hearing aids, including digital.

Portable loop

A portable hearing loop provides limited coverage and is designed for one to one conversation for people with hearing aids.

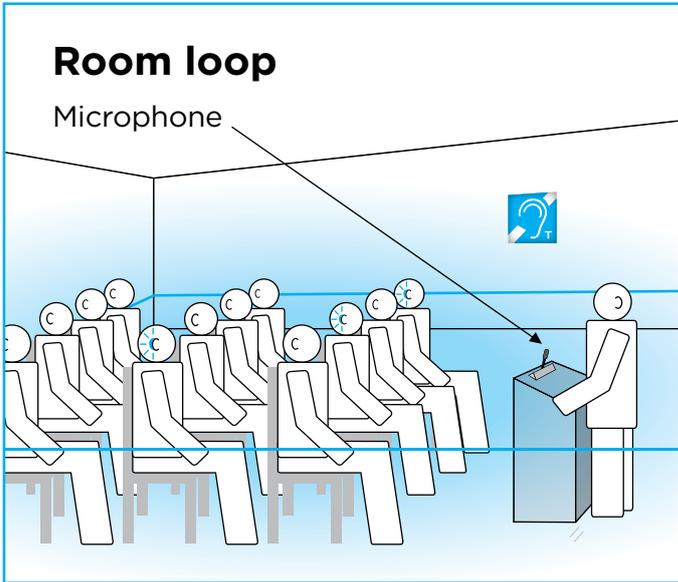
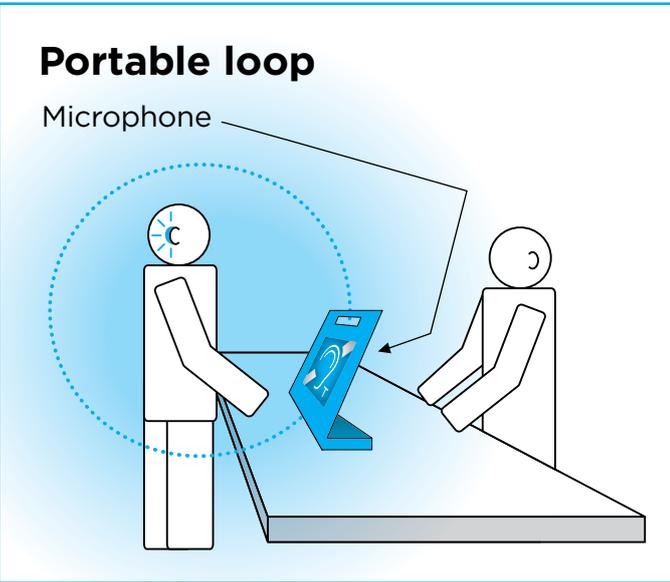
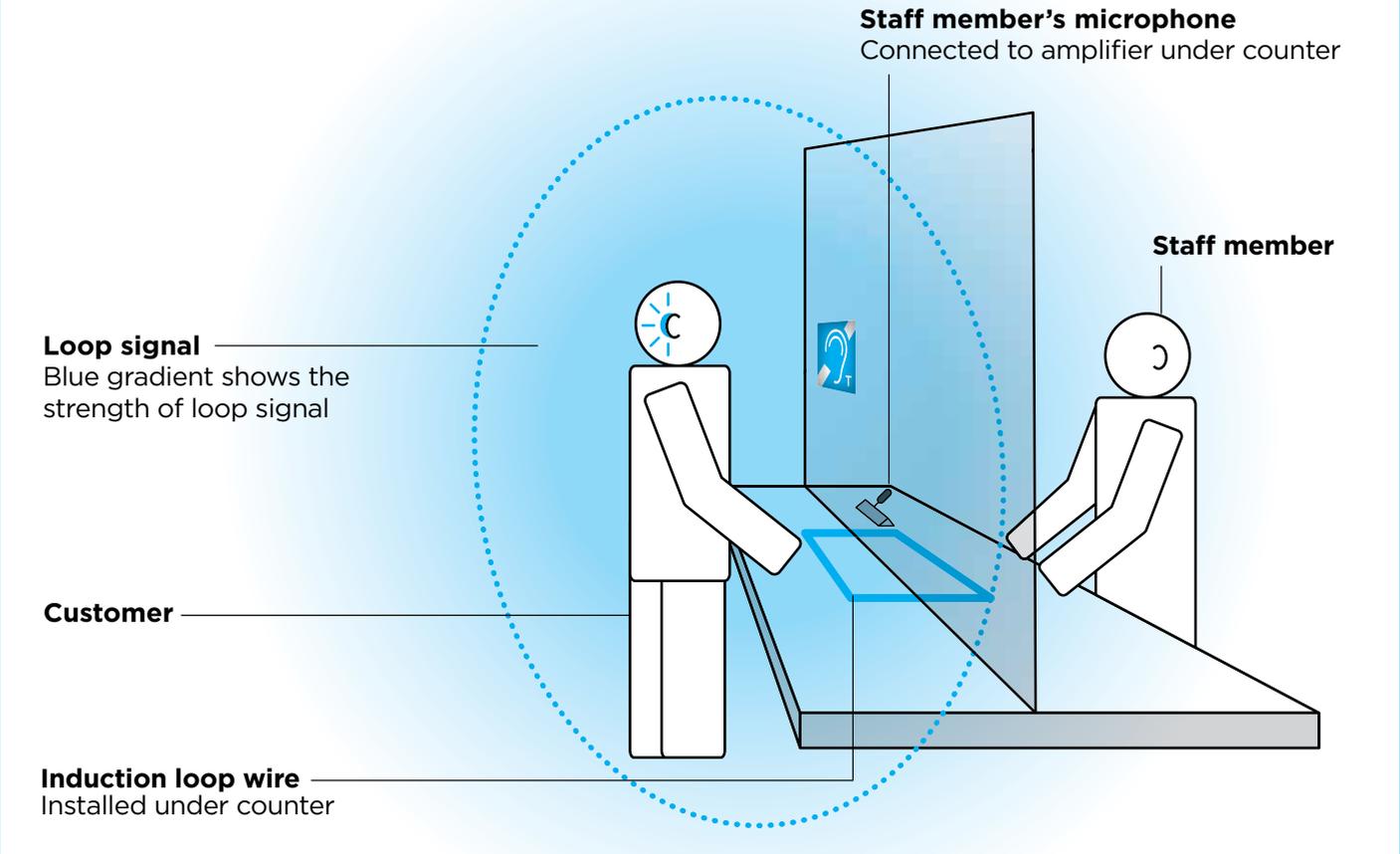
Room loop

This is designed to provide hearing loop facilities over a much wider area, for example large meeting rooms, auditoriums and lecture halls, places of worship, and entertainment venues.

Counter loop

This is specifically designed to provide hearing loop facilities at retail premises including shops, bank and post office counters, and also transport and entertainment ticket-booking offices.

A typical counter loop



Why should I provide induction loops?

The Equality Act 2010, which replaced 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.

Where should I put hearing loops?

The answer to this question depends on the service you provide. Ask your installer for advice on the most suitable location and quantity of loops in the premises.

We recommend that retailers, such as shops, banks, post offices or pharmacies, should install a minimum of one loop system for any group of counters, and additional loops for settings with a larger number of counters. You should also install a loop at all reception or information points.

The position of loops should be clearly signposted, and at least one looped counter should always be open for customer use.

Within an office or similar environment, we recommend that you put loops in all reception areas, a quarter of all meeting rooms and half of all booths or interview rooms.

Where else?

There should be a portable loop system available for use in rooms without a built-in system, and for any outreach work that you do. It should not be used to replace a fixed loop in areas such as counters and information points.

Where can I buy induction loop systems?

You can buy them from a range of suppliers in the UK, including from us (see inside back cover). When you choose an installer, check that they will install the system to conform to the British Standard Code of Practice for Audio Frequency Loop Systems BS 7594. This code ensures that a suitable loop system is provided and that it's designed and installed to professional standards. Contact us to discuss your loop requirements on 0808 808 0123 or by emailing helpline@hearingloss.org.uk

How much do hearing loops cost to install?

Getting hearing loops is much cheaper than you might think. Although costs vary according to premises and supplier, the cost of installing a counter loop can start from less than £600, while a portable counter loop can cost as little as £120 (Prices at September 2011).

How do I let people know where induction loops are available?



As part of the installation, you should receive one or more standard loop signs. These signs should be set apart from other signage, so they are clearly visible.

It's crucial that hearing aid wearers know that a loop system is installed and where it is. In the case of a reception area, for example, the sign should be positioned where the loop is effective. In a meeting room, a loop sign should be placed inside the room with clear signage to show where and how the loop can be switched on. If the whole room is looped, there should be a sign at the entrance too.



A loop listener and headphones can be used for routine checks by staff

How do I look after hearing loops?

Hearing loop systems need regular maintenance to ensure they are fully functional at all times.

- An assigned person should check the loop regularly, preferably on a weekly basis. The checks can be performed using a 'loop listener' and should be incorporated into existing maintenance procedures, for example when the building's fire alarm system is tested.
- A loop listener allows a non-hearing aid wearer to hear through the induction loop, and doubles up as a personal listener to support your customers who are hard of hearing in one-to-one meetings and conversations. Your installer may provide this or they are available from us. See www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/sonido
- You should have a clear process in place for reporting and resolving problems identified in regular checks. In addition, the loop should be thoroughly tested by your installer at least every 12 months.

Why does staff training matter?

If staff don't know enough about your loop system, things will start to go wrong with it. The loop might become unplugged, the microphone may be moved, or the portable loop might go missing or be left uncharged. At induction, all frontline staff should be shown how to use the system and how it can benefit customers. Ideally, staff should be given the chance to try out the loop for themselves using a loop listener and headphones.

How can I make my business even more accessible to people with hearing loss?

Our Louder than Words charter mark is a great way to demonstrate that you provide the best possible service to customers and staff with hearing loss. You can achieve this by fulfilling simple steps to make your business more accessible.

Contact us for more information about Louder than Words. Telephone 0207 294 3712
Email louderthanwords@hearingloss.org.uk

Key points

- **In many public situations, induction loops are often vital to ensure that hearing aid wearers can hear what you are saying.**
- **Increasing access to your service for people with hearing loss can be good for your business.**
- **Induction loops should be installed at customer-facing points, a quarter of all meeting rooms, half of all booths or interview rooms and portable loops should be provided for outreach work.**
- **Induction loops should be clearly signposted and checked regularly, with annual tests by a qualified supplier.**
- **Train your staff about the need for, and the function and use of, induction loops.**
- **Invest in a loop listener for regular checks.**

Where can I find out more?

For more information or advice about induction loops, deaf awareness, or any other issue relating to people who have hearing loss, visit our website www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk or use the contact details below.

Information Line

Telephone 0808 808 0123 (freephone)
helpline@hearingloss.org.uk

Deaf awareness training

We can help you become more deaf aware and make your organisation more accessible to customers and staff with hearing loss.
Telephone 0161 276 2312
training.services@hearingloss.org.uk

Louder than Words™ charter mark

To demonstrate best practice towards people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
Telephone 020 7294 3712
louderthanwords@hearingloss.org.uk

Advice on equipment

We can advise you on suitable equipment for your premises and provide an installation and maintenance service for loop systems and other equipment.
Telephone 01733 361199
solutions@hearingloss.org.uk
www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/shop

Communication support

We can help you access day-to-day activities, appointments, work and training by supplying interpreters, lipspeakers, speech-to-text reporters and other communication professionals.
Telephone 0845 685 8000
communication.services@hearingloss.org.uk

We're the charity taking action on hearing loss since 1911. We can't do this without your help.

To find out more about what we do and how you can support us go to www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Telephone 0808 808 0123

Textphone 0808 808 9000

Email helpline@hearingloss.org.uk