

induction loop systems

Audio Frequency induction loop systems can offer immense benefit to hearing aid users. This factsheet has been prepared especially for churches and is designed to explain what a loop system is and how it can offer your members very real and practical benefits.

What is a loop system?

An audio induction loop system is a special sound system for use by people who use hearing aids. It works by transmitting an audio signal from, say, a microphone or PA system, to a listener by means of a magnetic field. The elimination of a direct sound path greatly reduces or eliminates the interfering effects of distance and background noise. The user simply switches their hearing aid to the 'T' position in order to benefit.

Do we need one?

The Disability Discrimination Act that is now in force requires public buildings to install a loop system where it is reasonable to do so. The word reasonable is open to interpretation but it is possible that you could face a charge of discrimination if you do not provide one.

Can all hearing aids use the loop system?

All NHS aids have the necessary 'T' switch. Some private in-ear aids may not have this facility. If in doubt, the switch is normally clearly visible on the aid except for some very modern miniature aids that are controlled with a remote control.

What is wrong with a hearing aid used normally?

Hearing aids used normally are obviously of great benefit to the user and there is little or no problem if they are engaged in a close conversation with someone. Problems do arise however when there is a lot of background noise or if they are some distance from the sound source. In these circumstances, the hearing aid must be turned up in order to hear

and this will also amplify sounds that are unwanted. In churches this can be exceptionally frustrating as in many cases background noise such as coughs, sneezes and paper rustling can partially or completely overpower the sound they are trying to hear. Because the induction loop transmits only the wanted sound directly to the hearing aid, these problems do not arise. In most cases a loop system will give a dramatic improvement to the quality and clarity of sound heard by someone who is hard of hearing. It will allow some people to hear the service properly for the first time in many years.

Does the use of a loop system draw attention to hearing aid users?

Not at all. Remember that the hearing aid user simply switches their aid to the 'T' position. They do not need to plug into anything and they can sit anywhere within the area covered by the loop. The loop system is installed to be as unobtrusive as possible and indeed we supply small signs indicating the presence of a system as in most cases the system is completely invisible. There is no limit to the number of people who can use the system as long as they are all within the bounds of the loop.

How large an area can be covered?

Any size of church can be completely covered by a loop system. Some churches may elect to cover only part of the building but while this may save some money it does mean that you are restricting your hearing impaired members in their choice of seating.

How difficult is it to operate?

A loop system in a church receives its signal from the PA system. We set the loop system to perform to the standard specified in BS6259:1982 and unless major changes are made to the PA system, the loop system should not require

readjustment. The controls on the loop system are tamper-proof.

We do not have a PA system. Can a loop system operate without one?

Yes. The loop system has an input for a microphone that can be used if there is no PA system.

Can people without a hearing aid benefit from a loop system?

Not directly, but portable loop receivers are available which operate with headphones to give the benefits of a loop system to those people who do not use a hearing aid. It must be remembered that a loop system can only benefit those with some hearing capability. The profoundly deaf unfortunately will not be helped by a loop system.

Is the system suitable for all buildings?

As the loop system operates using a magnetic field, anything that produces a magnetic field may interfere with it. Problems may be encountered with large transformers and certain types of lighting but during our site survey we check the level of background magnetic field. Only on rare occasions is it high enough to cause problems. Large amounts of metal such as concrete reinforcement and structural steelwork within the building may also affect the field but we can usually cope with these problems. Electric guitars with single coil pickups may pick up the loop signal and cause problems with the guitar amplifier. Humbucking guitar pickups are immune.

Cost?

As each installation varies in size and complexity, a firm price can be given only after the site survey but for most churches it will probably cost from £700 for a small hall up to £950 for a large church.

