

Hearing loss



WHAT IS HEARING LOSS?

The [Royal National Institute for Deaf People](#) (RNID) estimates that “in the UK, more than 40% of people over 50 years old have hearing loss, rising to more than 70% of people over the age of 70”.

Hearing loss is a term used when sound signals do not reach the brain. There are many different types of hearing loss and different degrees of severity:

- **Mild hearing loss** – Your client may have difficulty hearing speech clearly in a busy environment. They may struggle to hear quiet speech, especially soft sounds like “s” and “f”.
- **Moderate hearing loss** – Your client may struggle to hear speech at a normal volume and may require amplification.
- **Severe hearing loss** – Your client will not be able to hear normal speech and may only be able to hear loud sounds.
- **Profound hearing loss** – Your client will not be able to hear any speech and may only hear some loud sounds.

N.B. This guide is for legal professionals working with clients who have mild to moderate hearing loss, rather than d/Deaf clients, who may have severe or profound hearing loss and may require a BSL (British Sign Language) interpreter or a lip-speaker.

AMPLIFICATION DEVICES

Hearing aids and hearing loops are two devices which can amplify sound for your client.

Hearing loops can be used separately from or in conjunction with hearing aids at court. Your client can be provided with a hearing loop headphone set or can wear a device around their neck which broadcasts sound from the courtroom hearing loop to

their hearing aid (when these are set to the ‘T’ function). Court hearing loops can be affected by feedback and background noise, so may not ensure clear hearing at all times.

TIPS FOR LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

The strategies required to support an individual with mild or moderate hearing loss will vary from person to person and may be affected by any other communication needs they have. An [intermediary assessment](#) will provide insight into the person’s strengths and difficulties and make bespoke recommendations to support them at all stages of proceedings. The following general tips may be of assistance:

- **Learn more about your client’s hearing.** Is their hearing different in different environments? How has their hearing loss previously impacted them in legal proceedings? What assists their hearing? Have they used a hearing loop before? What was their experience of this?
- **Adapt the communication environment.** Your client is likely to hear speech sounds best in a quiet setting, without background noise. A busy courtroom with loud typing and paper shuffling may be particularly challenging. Adjustments or repetition of key points may be required.
- **Face your client** and ensure you have their full attention before speaking, so that they can see your mouth.
- **Ensure just one person speaks at a time.** It can be much more challenging to hear clearly when multiple people are speaking.
- **Use writing (if your client has effective literacy),** on paper, on a laptop screen or via text, to convey key messages your client is struggling to hear.

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communication matters in the courts

Visit www.communicourt.co.uk to register for free and full access to our guides and resources.

Intermediaries are impartial and our duty is to the court. We are not witnesses or advocates. This information is intended as a guide only to help you decide if your client needs our support.

How we can help you



If your client is using a hearing loop in the courtroom:

- **Avoid hybrid hearings.** These can cause feedback.
- **Use a flashcard or agreed signal** to allow your client to indicate when they are unable to hear. The clarity of the hearing loop may fluctuate.
- **Be alert to issues with interpreters and intermediaries.** When wearing a hearing loop, your client may not be able to hear their interpreter or intermediary clearly and alternative arrangements may need to be made.

REQUESTING AN INTERMEDIARY ASSESSMENT

If you think your client may have a communication difficulty, intermediary support is fully funded. Communicourt assessments are simple to arrange using the process outlined below.

An intermediary assessment can provide professionals and the court with more insight into your client's communication strengths and difficulties, and how these may impact them during proceedings.

We produce comprehensive communication reports which identify issues and make detailed recommendations to help you and your client, even in cases where an intermediary is not recommended.

If an intermediary is recommended, one of our highly trained intermediaries can attend conferences (subject to funding) and hearings to facilitate those recommendations, meaning you can focus on your job.

Our experience means we can recommend solutions that make a tangible difference and support the justice system in getting a fair result.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Read more about hearing loops and legal proceedings, including the experiences of a former judge who made use of this amplification device \(Communicourt blog\)](#)
- [Read more strategies to assist a person who has a hearing loss \(UCFS Health\)](#)
- [Planning to question someone who is deaf \(The Advocates' Gateway\)](#) – this resource includes information relevant to court users who are d/Deaf but also features some useful information for advocates working with court users who have a hearing loss.

HOW TO GET SUPPORT



BOOK ONLINE

Refer your client for an assessment through our online booking system [communicourt.co.uk](https://www.communicourt.co.uk)

5 minutes

FUNDING

We will send you a quote that you need to send to HMCTS and Legal Aid for them to approve funding

24 Hours

BOOK THE ASSESSMENT

Once you have funding in place, please let us know. We will then arrange an assessment

4-6 weeks

ASSESSMENT

The 3 hour assessment can be carried out in person or remotely. You will then receive a report

7 days

BOOK COURT DATES

We will send booking forms which must be signed by the court. Once received we will then book your intermediary

Throughout the trial