

Hearing Loss and Triratna Buddhist Centres and Retreat Centres

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Hearing loss is a hidden disability.

We can be unaware that we are discriminating against, and excluding people from the Dharma because they simply can't hear us.

If there are no Sangha members with hearing impairment at your Centre, it could be that they have left.

Complete deafness is rare - more likely is a reduction in quality of hearing. Hearing loss is often age related - some frequencies are lost, as also is the ability to filter background noises. Noisy situations like the classic Triratna Tea Break can be very difficult for those with hearing loss.

There is no excuse for us to be discriminating against hearing impaired people - And there is no excuse for people who run classes to be ignorant of the needs of hearing impaired people or of how to operate the loop system.

Meditation teaching

Led meditations can be hard to hear because the leader's voice becomes softer and softer until the instructions are inaudible. Even those with good hearing can find this difficult.

Some people may not be able to hear the frequencies of the bell.

The acoustics of the room may make it harder to hear - either because the surfaces are very absorbent, or very echoey.

Part of hearing impairment awareness may be having more varied teaching than voice alone - having the stages of the meditation on a flipchart, and having stage numbers on a visible card.

Group Discussion

People turning away, or speaking rapidly one after the other, or even noises from a nearby group can all be hard for someone who is hearing impaired

Dharma teaching

If the teacher turns away to write on the board their words may be lost. Avoid over reliance on spoken instructions without support from pre-prepared flipcharts.

Training your Dharma teachers

Loop systems won't work if the teacher or class leader does not know how to operate them. The system will involve a wire loop around the room, a microphone and a transmitter box which all need to be in working order.

Adding the hearing loop symbol to your publicity just as it would be good to have the wheelchair accessible symbol on our websites and publicity; so it would be good to have the hearing loop symbol.

Expert advice

The RNID is available to advise on how to install and operate loop systems.

www.rnid.org.uk/

They also sell, or are agents for, loop systems. They also have other useful aids to hearing for people without hearing aids.

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

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 M1 2NQ

Summary

- Induction loops are vital to ensure accessibility for hearing aid wearers.
- Increasing access to your Centre for people who are deaf or hard of hearing will make our work to spread the Dharma more effective.
- Induction loops and microphones should be installed in our shrine rooms and main meeting rooms - they don't have to be in every room.
- Know how to check and use your Induction loops and microphone.
- Train your Dharma teachers about the need for and function of induction loops and teaching methods which help hearing impaired people.