

## **BS8300 Design of New Buildings**

British Standards BS8300 is the new code of practice for the design of new buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people. The standard states that a "hearing enhancement system, using induction loop, infra-red or radio transmission must be installed in rooms or spaces used for meetings, lectures, classes, performances, spectator sports or films and used at service or reception areas where the background noise level is high or where glazed screens are used" (9.3.2).

It pinpoints the following areas for consideration: seated waiting areas, ticket sales and information points; fitness suites and exercise studios; churches; crematoria and cemetery chapels, educational, cultural and scientific buildings.

## **BUILDING REGULATIONS (1992)**

Current building regulations state that newly erected or substantially reconstructed non-domestic buildings must provide aids for the hearing impaired. The aim is to enable both members of the public and employees to play a full part in the conferences, committee meetings etc.

Areas requiring cover include booking and ticket offices where the customer is separated by the vendor by a glazed screen, reception areas, auditoria and meeting rooms in excess of 100m<sup>2</sup>.

The regulations state that a person with a hearing disability must receive a signal some 20dB above that received by a person with normal hearing. The system should be able to suppress reverberation, audience and other environmental noise.

## **Care Standards Act (2002)**

On the 1st April 2002, the Government's new Care Standards Act came into force.

The act provides 'minimum standards below which no provider is expected to operate' and will effect local authority homes, charter homes and other homes not currently registered (domiciliary care agencies, fostering agencies and residential family centres).

These new regulations demand that care homes provide certain adaptations and equipment for residents, specifically:-

Standard 22.6 - 'Facilities, including communication aids (e.g. a loop system), and signs are provided to assist the needs of all service users, taking account of the needs, for example, of those with hearing impairment, visual impairment, dual sensory impairments, learning disabilities or dementia or other cognitive impairment, where necessary.'

## **Disability Discrimination Act**

The aim of the Disability Discrimination Act is to stop discrimination against disabled people - including the hearing impaired. The Act will be extended in 2002 to cover education in schools and colleges and will be strengthened further in October 2004 as the Disability Rights Commission's (DRC) new Code of Practice comes into effect.

Service providers, i.e. companies or organisations offering goods, facilities and services to the general public, must make 'reasonable' adjustments to ensure they do not unlawfully discriminate against disabled people. Employers must also take measures to ensure that existing and potential employees are not disadvantaged in the workplace.

Under the Act 'reasonable adjustments' include the provision of various auxiliary aids including induction loop systems, to enable deaf or hard of hearing person to access goods, facilities or services available to the general public. At present, service providers do not have to make any permanent adjustments to their buildings. This however is about to change.

From 2004, service providers will be required to install permanent induction loops or infra-red systems where it is impossible or unreasonably difficult for a deaf person to make use of a service.

Service providers who fail to make the adequate provision for people with hearing disabilities face prosecution. Further more it is not enough to simply install an induction loop system - it must be properly maintained and staff must know how to use it (DDA, Auxiliary Aids and services 5.13)

The DRC advises services providers to take steps now to prepare for their extended obligations.

**Disability Discrimination Act (key dates)**

**01/10/2004** Where there is a physical feature that makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to make use of a service, service providers will have to take all reasonable steps to remove, alter or avoid it if the service cannot be provided by a reasonable alternative method

**01/10/2004** The employment provision threshold of the DDA will be lowered to companies of two or more

**01/10/99** Service providers are required to make reasonable adjustments to policies, procedures and practices which exclude disabled people, provide auxiliary aids and services

**01/12/98** The employment provisions of the DDA extended to employers with 15 or more employees

**02/12/96** First rights of access came into effect and placed a duty on service providers not to refuse service to disabled people; offer a worse service; or offer service on worse terms for a reason related to the person's disability