

Level Playing Field

www.levelplayingfield.org.uk



Deaf or Hard of Hearing Helpsheet

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Introduction

All Deaf or hard of hearing supporters should be able to enjoy equality of experience when attending a sports event, and all clubs have an anticipatory duty to consider the needs of such supporters. This means having the opportunity to sit with/alongside their own supporters, and being treated with respect by club staff and match-day stewards.

Level Playing Field Proposals

1. A senior member of the club management board should have overall responsibility for all disability issues, including those that affect Deaf or hard of hearing supporters.
2. All clubs should have a disability policy that details the clubs' guiding principles, practices and procedures for all aspects of the clubs' operations. This policy should include the needs of Deaf or hard of hearing supporters, and should be publicly available in formats accessible for Deaf or hard of hearing supporters. This policy together with an annual access strategy or business plan for improvements should be reviewed by management on a regular basis with consultation with disabled supporters and local disability groups. This process should include Deaf or hard of hearing supporters.
3. Staff and match day stewards should be well trained and sensitive to the needs of Deaf or hard of hearing supporters. This should include training in deaf awareness, and where possible, one or two members of staff should also be BSL (British Sign Language) trained.
4. Clubs should appoint a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) who is well trained and sensitive to the needs of Deaf or hard of hearing supporters. The DLO should ideally be trained to BSL Level One standard.

5. Audio induction loop facilities should be available within the ticketing office and merchandising outlets and consideration should also be given to the use of permanent or portable units in hospitality areas. These facilities should be regularly tested and staffs trained in their use, and receive regular refresher training.
6. Where the vendor is separated from the customer by screen, consideration should be given to the installation of good quality lighting and non-reflective glass, in order to meet potential needs of Deaf or hard of hearing customers who need to lip-read.
7. Alternative methods of communication within ticketing and merchandising outlets should be available for Deaf or hard of hearing customers, such as textphones or e-mail. Club staff that use telephones to communicate with supporters should have knowledge of how to make and receive telephone calls using RNID's 'TextRelay' system.
8. In areas where club staff are most likely to come into contact with Deaf or hard of hearing people, they should, where possible, have access to a facility for taking and exchanging written notes in order to be able to communicate with those who either communicate orally, but who may not do so clearly, or do not communicate orally at all.
9. Many clubs offer only fixed positions for receiving information via Induction Loops; these can limit choice and have some technical issues. A resolution is to consider new technology and portable headsets which will allow the user to sit anywhere within the stadium.
10. Clubs should also take account of the needs of Deaf or hard of hearing supporters who use Assistance Dogs. As registered assistance dogs, hearing dogs should be

afforded the same access and rights as guide dogs, and each application for a reasonable adjustment (e.g. water bowl) should be viewed on its own merit.

11. Signage designed to ensure safe and effective circulation around stadia should take into account the needs of Deaf or hard of hearing spectators; all information on signage should be provided as clearly and simply as possible, including that relating to emergency evacuation.
12. Where appropriate, emergency evacuation information systems should consist of visual instructions on electronic scoreboards or video screens. Wherever possible, match-day programmes should additionally be used as a means of communicating Health and Safety related information.
13. Warning systems consist of evacuation signals, announcements over the public address system, and visual instructions on electronic scoreboards. Whilst, in most situations, it would be reasonable for those who are deaf or hard of hearing to rely on others for warning, there may be situations where they are on their own, e.g. in the toilet. Clubs should therefore consider the installation of flashing warning lights in the toilet, which are regularly maintained and checked.
14. Clubs should provide written information and notices relating to match-day operations and advertisements on scoreboards and in handouts; in addition PA announcements both before and during the game should be reproduced/shown on the big screen/scoreboard (if available) e.g. substitutions, team sheets etc.
15. Clubs should ensure, where possible, that all club-branded multi-media information services such as websites, DVDs or TV channels are as accessible for Deaf or hard of hearing people as possible. This may mean

providing transcripts of auditory information, or placing subtitles or BSL translation on visual information. Where a service (e.g. club website or DVD) is provided externally to the club, it is the host provider who has the duty to make that service accessible.

Level Playing Field (LPF) does not act in any legal capacity or as registered access consultants, and makes no representation and gives no warranty as to the accurateness or suitability of any advice contained within this policy. The views expressed in this policy are user led and intended only to provide a better understanding of key issues in relation to this policy. LPF advises that each football club should commission an access audit of its stadium and match and non match day facilities and services. An access audit should be undertaken by an experienced NRAC registered Access consultant who is experienced in assessing sports stadia. Please contact LPF for further advice and for details of the LPF Access Audit programme.

The LPF Board would like to thank those individuals and organisations who gave so freely of their time and expertise in the preparation of this guidance.