HEARING IMPAIRMENT

WHAT IS A HEARING IMPAIRMENT?

Deafness is a hidden disability and it is sometimes hard to know whether someone has a hearing impairment and may require additional communication requirements. Deaf people have different levels of hearing, from mild to total deafness. This could include temporary deafness such as glue ear.

Deafness can be genetic (i.e. genetically transmitted) or acquired (i.e. caused by illness such as mumps, measles, meningitis or by repeated or prolonged exposure to loud noises).

GENERAL INFORMATION

It's important to know how the person you are communicating with prefers to communicate and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate this.

There are different methods you can use, some of which are further described below:

- **Auditory-Oral:**
  with the use of technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, many deaf people develop listening skills and spoken language.

- **Lip-reading:**
  is the ability to read lip patterns. However, many speech sounds look the same when spoken (e.g. 'pat'/'bat') so it is difficult for deaf people to rely solely on lip-reading to communicate; gestures and body language are very important.

- **British Sign Language (BSL):**
  it is a visual language using handshapes, facial expressions, gestures and body language to communicate. BSL is an independent and complete language with a unique vocabulary. It has a structure and grammar different from that of written and spoken English.

- **Makaton:**
  is a sign system that is used with children and adults (deaf and hearing), who may have communication and/or learning disabilities. It uses speech together with signs (taken from BSL) and symbols, and is grammar-free.

DID YOU KNOW:

There are estimated to be approximately **12 MILLION ADULTS** with hearing loss in the UK.
(Action on hearing loss)

There are approximately **50,000 CHILDREN** with hearing loss in the UK.
Around half are born with hearing loss while the other half lose their hearing during childhood.

Wearing a hearing aid (or cochlear implant) neither corrects language nor restores perfect hearing and so not all deaf people will wear one.

THERE ARE NO ADAPTATIONS TO THE GAME; however there are some deaf specific competitions for those who are eligible.

LTA TENNIS FOR BRITAIN

PLAYER PATHWAY AND COMPETITIONS

For international and national level deaf competitions, players must have a hearing loss of at least 55 decibels (dB HL) in the better ear. There are no adaptations to the game otherwise.

All tennis competitions are open for deaf players to compete and get involved in, there additional deaf specific events that take place regionally, nationally and internationally which are for those that meet the eligibility requirements. The pinnacle of the sport is the Deaflympics and World Deaf Tennis Championships.

For more information on the player pathway and competitions please read our **Disability Tennis Coaching Resource**

COACHES' CORNER

Each deaf player has different requirements and adjustments so speak to them before the start of their first session to establish a mutually acceptable method of communication.

It is important to bear in mind that it may be more difficult for a new player who is deaf to acquire the confidence to mix with new people and to learn a new sport due to potential communication barriers, but there are no adaptations to make to the sport – only to suit their playing ability.

- Visual signals are vital for activities involving deaf players; helps understanding.
- Use common sense techniques using clear visual signals, use demonstrations but keep brief.
- Check understanding before commencing activities.
- Ensure your face is visible to all so when talking and providing feedback.
- Writing instructions and / or drawing / showing diagrams is a brilliant way of communicating to someone with a hearing impairment.

CONTACT US
FOR MORE INFO

For further information on hearing impaired tennis please contact the LTA Disability Development team:

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Please visit: www.lta.org.uk

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