

Hearing loops for use in court

All courts should have 'hearing loops' readily available, and should provide them to interpreters on request.

What is a hearing loop?

A hearing loop is basically a small receiver (the size of a mobile phone). You will be given a new set of detachable earphones that you place in your ears and connect to the hearing loop. After the proceedings, you can keep the earphones (but not the receiver).



a typical hearing loop receiver
(with brand name obscured)

Once you have the earphones in place, just turn the receiver's dial to the 'ON' position, then adjust the volume until it is comfortable for you.

How does a hearing loop work / what does it do?

Microphones in front of the judge, barristers and witness box are switched 'ON' at all times. The hearing loop relays the voices picked up by the microphones, so you can hear them more easily.

The hearing loop is a unidirectional device, in other words, you can hear everyone but you cannot transmit your voice. For a court interpreter, it is the most useful piece of assistive technology** in the courtroom.

Who uses a hearing loop?

Interpreters working in court are entitled to ask for a hearing loop.

If the witness or defendant also wants to hear what is said in English, they or the interpreter can request a hearing loop for them as well.*

* CAUTION: If the witness or defendant wants to hear the interpreter's chuchotage in LOTE, but is listening to the proceedings via a hearing loop, chuchotage becomes difficult, as they will hear the interpreter's voice both live *and* coming from the device. If a LOTE-speaking witness or defendant requests a hearing loop, therefore, the interpreter should make them aware of this issue.

** NOTE: Some courts also have simultaneous interpreting equipment – a different system to a hearing loop. For longer proceedings, such as trials, interpreters should enquire whether there is simultaneous equipment available and if it is provided, ask for instructions on how to use it. It shouldn't be too difficult to use.