

# Vision and Hearing Impairments

## Vision impairment

Vision impairment is a term used to describe any kind of vision loss. This can include someone who cannot see at all or someone who has partial vision loss.

### Supporting members with vision impairments

- When approaching someone with a vision impairment, remember to tell them who you are even if you know them.
- For some people with a vision impairment shaking hands may not be a comfortable practice.
- If you are asked to guide or assist a person with a vision impairment, offer your arm instead of grabbing theirs.
- When assisting someone with a vision impairment it is important to remember that the beach is a constantly changing environment, which can be very daunting.
- Establishing trust will be extremely important, as the person will need to be confident that you will inform them of any hazards and assist to keep them safe.
- Assure the person that you will warn them of any hazards.
- Being descriptive about what is happening around them, even if it is unrelated to keeping them safe, will add to their experience and enjoyment and help establish trust.
- For example, if they are walking into the water at the beach let them know if there is an uneven surface coming up or the size of a wave coming, describe the environment and conditions.
- Offer to read written information for a person with a vision impairment when appropriate.
- When in doubt ask the person what their preferences are.
- Whistles or auditory cues can be used as a directional guide instead of direct contact during appropriate programed activities
- You can hear a smile so relax and enjoy the person's company

## Hearing impairment

A hearing impairment is a hearing loss that prevents a person from totally receiving sounds through the ear. If the loss is mild, the person has difficulty hearing faint or distant speech. A person with this degree of hearing impairment may use a hearing aid to amplify sounds. During water activities those who use hearing aids will not be able to wear them.

People with hearing impairments communicate in a number of different ways including lip reading and Auslan signing.

### Supporting members with hearing impairments

- Members with hearing impairments may easily be able to participate in their nipper Age Group or chosen membership category with the appropriate support
- Face people with hearing impairments when you talk to them so they can see your lips
- Slow the rate at which you speak (but not much).
- Speak in a normal modulated voice at a level befitting the environment.