

The HSE Categorisation Scheme

Category	Calculation	Action
1. ACCEPTABLE HEARING ABILITY Hearing within normal limits.	Sum of hearing levels at 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 kHz.	None.
2. MILD HEARING IMPAIRMENT Hearing within 20 th percentile, ie. Hearing level normally experienced by 1 person in 5. May indicate developing NIHL.	Sum of hearing levels at 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 kHz. Compare value with figure given for appropriate age band and gender in Classification Table.	Warning.
3. POOR HEARING Hearing within 5 th percentile, ie hearing level normally experienced by 1 person in 20. Suggests significant NIHL.	Sum of hearing levels at 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 kHz. Compare value with figure given for appropriate age band and gender in Classification Table.	Referral.
4. RAPID HEARING LOSS Reduction in hearing level of 30 dB or more, within 3 years or less. Such a change could be caused by noise exposure or disease.	Sum of hearing levels at 3, 4 and 6 kHz.	Referral.

Classification Table

Sum of hearing levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 kHz				
Age	Males		Females	
	Warning level	Referral level	Warning level	Referral level
18-24	51	95	46	78
25-29	67	113	55	91
30-34	82	132	63	105
35-39	100	154	71	119
40-44	121	183	80	134
45-49	142	211	93	153
50-54	165	240	111	176
55-59	190	269	131	204
60-64	217	296	157	235
65	235	311	175	255

- Add hearing levels at 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 kHz.
- If the sum for **both** ears is below the warning level, then that individual will fall within **Cat 1**.
- If the sum for **either** ear exceeds or is equal to the warning threshold level for their respective age and gender, then the individual will fall into **Cat 2**.
- If the sum exceeds or is equal to the referral level for either ear then the individual would fall into **Cat 3**, and would require referral for further medical advice.
- To determine whether there has been a rapid loss in hearing since the last examination, a sum of the hearing thresholds obtained at 3, 4 and 6 kHz should be made. If the previous test was performed within the last three years and an **increase in hearing threshold level of 30 dB or more (as a sum of 3, 4, and 6 kHz)** is found, then this individual would fall into **Cat 4 – rapid hearing loss** and require referral on for further medical advice.
- A further sum should be undertaken to determine whether the individual has any unilateral hearing loss suggesting a problem due to disease or infection. Sum the hearing levels at 1, 2, 3 and 4 kHz for both ears. If the **difference between the ears is greater than 40 dB**, the individual should be advised of the findings and referred on for further medical advice.

(≤ 20 dB – normal

20 – 45 dB – mild hearing loss

50 – 65 dB - moderate hearing loss

70 – 85 dB - severe hearing loss

90 dB - profound hearing loss)