

# Deaf-friendly education

Northern Ireland



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**! A note about terms**

We use the term ‘deaf’ to refer to all types of hearing loss, from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary hearing loss such as glue ear. We include pupils the school may identify as having a ‘hearing impairment’ in the School Census.

We use the term ‘parent’ to refer to all parents and carers of children.

At time of writing, changes to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) framework are in the process of being introduced. This includes use of the term ‘learning support co-ordinator’ (LSC) to coordinate support for children with SEN, replacing ‘special educational needs co-ordinators’ (SENCo). This resource uses the term ‘SENCo’, as this is the correct term at time of publication<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Learning Support Co-ordinator (LSC) role is referenced in Section 3 of the SEND Act (NI) 2016, however Section 3 has not been commenced at time of drafting.

# 1 Introduction

Deafness is not a learning disability and, given the right support, deaf children can make the same progress as hearing children of similar cognitive ability.

The majority of deaf pupils are educated in mainstream schools, yet many deaf children do not achieve the same academic outcomes as their hearing peers. We know that:

- **deaf pupils can learn as much as their hearing peers** when they are taught by teachers who recognise and can adapt teaching methods and materials to accommodate their strengths and needs
- **deaf pupils achieve more when both teachers and families have high expectations**
- **deaf pupils may not receive the support they need** especially if they have good speech
- **a setting's acoustic environment** (listening conditions) can have a huge impact on deaf children's ability to access information and learn
- **qualities such as assertiveness, confidence and resilience**, promoted within the school setting, benefit deaf pupils
- **deaf pupils do better when their families are engaged** and have the information they need to support their decision-making. Informed choice allows parents to be fully involved in their child's education, both formally and informally
- **families value the opportunities their child has to attend school clubs and activities** and be part of the school and local community.<sup>2</sup>

## Who is this resource for?

This resource is for anyone who works with deaf children in educational settings.

## How to use this resource

This resource should be used alongside support and advice from the Education Authority's Sensory Service.

**“My child needs to grow up to live their life similar to a hearing peer. The same level of confidence, intelligence, academic qualifications, job prospects and opportunities, independence, able to form relationships with other people and live a satisfying life.”**

– Parent

<sup>2</sup>O'Neill, R., Arendt, J. and Marschark, M., 2014. Report from the achievement and opportunities for deaf students in the United Kingdom: From Research to Practice project. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh. [www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/18805218/EDU\\_37468\\_Nuffield\\_Report\\_MASTER\\_v3.pdf](http://www.research.ed.ac.uk/portal/files/18805218/EDU_37468_Nuffield_Report_MASTER_v3.pdf) (accessed 7 February 2022).

## 2

# Deafness and its impact on learning

Did you know that 8 out of 10 children will experience an episode of deafness before the age of 10?

**Childhood deafness** presents a very significant barrier to pupils acquiring communication and language, and affects their cognitive, emotional and social development. Even mild deafness can have a significant, and detrimental, impact on a child's ability to learn.

### Levels and types of deafness

The levels and types of childhood deafness vary considerably. They include permanent mild, moderate, severe or profound hearing loss in one or both ears, and temporary hearing loss, such as glue ear.

The Teacher of the Deaf will be able to explain the individual deaf pupil's level of hearing by showing you an audiogram. An audiogram is a chart used by an audiologist to record the results of the hearing assessment.

It is estimated that at any one time 20% of children in reception class have glue ear. It's important to look out for any possible signs of deafness and to monitor deaf pupils' hearing levels in case of deterioration.

Further details on the types and levels of deafness are given in **Appendix 1**.

### Hearing aids and cochlear implants

Deaf children use different types of personal hearing technology supplied by health and social care, such as hearing aids, bone conduction hearing devices or cochlear implants. More information about the technology that deaf children may use can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Hearing technologies cannot replace normal hearing. Although they are programmed to help the wearer hear speech, a lot of background noise is also made up of speech sounds. This may mean pupils will find it hard to understand speech in group learning, a noisy playground or open-plan break out space. Also, sounds 'bounce' off hard surfaces making it harder for pupils to identify individual voices. They may have problems hearing in a classroom, gym or dining hall with wooden floors and hard surfaces.

## Acquired or a change in deafness

Children may start school or pre-school without a diagnosis of deafness or acquire a permanent hearing loss while at school. At primary age this is most likely to happen following a serious illness, such as meningitis, but it can happen at any time.

It is important for staff to look out for any possible signs of deafness and to monitor deaf children's hearing levels in case of deterioration.



For more information on causes of hearing loss or to find links to charities and support groups, visit: [www.ndcs.org.uk/causesofdeafness](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/causesofdeafness).

## Deafness and additional needs

Many children with learning difficulties and/or other disabilities are also deaf. Often the child's deafness is overshadowed by their other difficulties. It is important to take steps to address the impact of the deafness so that they can access learning, communicate and socialise.

## Mild, unilateral or temporary hearing loss

Many children with a mild hearing loss or glue ear do not wear hearing technology and will not receive support from a Teacher of the Deaf. However, information is available on the EA Sensory Service website. In many cases these children have normal speech and language development and they do well. However, for some children, mild, unilateral or temporary deafness can have a significant and adverse impact on their development.

Children with a mild hearing loss, unlike adults, may not be able to filter out background noise. They may also lack the knowledge, vocabulary and context to be able to work out what has been said if they mishear. This means they miss out on a lot of the new vocabulary and concepts being taught every day in educational settings.

Other challenges include:

- difficulties in hearing speech on one side and locating the source of sound
- missing key information
- tiredness, frustration and a shorter attention span
- difficulties participating in group discussions and activities
- speech, language and literacy difficulties.



To find out more about the impact of mild, unilateral and temporary hearing loss, possible signs and strategies to support effective communication, read our resource at: [www.ndcs.org.uk/mild](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/mild).

## Identifying deafness

Children may start school or pre-school without a diagnosis of hearing loss or acquire a permanent hearing loss while at school. It is therefore important for staff to look out for any of the possible signs of hearing loss. These may include:

- not responding when called
- watching faces or lips intently
- constantly asking for repetition
- not always following instructions straight away
- misunderstanding or ignoring instructions
- watching what others are doing before doing it themselves
- seeking assistance from peers
- talking either too loudly or too softly
- appearing inattentive or as though daydreaming
- making little or no contribution to class discussions
- complaining about not being able to hear
- tiring easily
- becoming easily frustrated
- appearing isolated and less involved in social group activities
- difficulties identifying or producing individual speech sounds.

Children with temporary hearing loss may demonstrate these behaviours intermittently.

If any member of staff is concerned that a child may have an undiagnosed hearing loss, the school should discuss the matter with the family and suggest that their child is taken to the GP.

## Impact of deafness on development and learning

Deaf children have a diverse range of needs. These include different types of hearing technologies and different ways of communicating and learning. It is important to find out from the child, their family and the Teacher of the Deaf what their hearing, learning and communication preferences are and how best to support them.

The table below includes strategies to support deaf pupils' needs so they can make the same progress as other pupils of a similar age and cognitive ability. It's important to note that the child's hearing technology should be used effectively and appropriately at all times.

You should be aware of:	Teaching, learning and support strategies
<p>Slower communication and language development, with reduced vocabulary and understanding of words and concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out the pupil's communication needs. Find out the pupil's language levels from regular assessment and any recommendations or targets that have been set.</li> <li>• Monitor and develop language skills through focused interventions.</li> <li>• Use visual aids and everyday items to support understanding.</li> <li>• Minimise use of idioms and colloquialisms but keep language rich and varied.</li> <li>• Think about how language is used and not just what's said (pragmatics).</li> <li>• Support social skills.</li> <li>• Identify and teach key vocabulary and share with parents and other professionals.</li> <li>• Develop vocabulary associated with emotions and feelings through discussions around events, others' points of view and book sharing.</li> <li>• Check understanding and clarify and rephrase if needed.</li> <li>• Involve parents in interventions to support learning.</li> </ul>

You should be aware of:	Teaching, learning and support strategies
Difficulties with listening skills, such as processing spoken language and accessing certain speech sounds, or less well-developed listening skills.	Provide a quiet area if required. Keep background noise to a minimum and be aware of the limitations of hearing technologies. Make sure hearing technologies are being used correctly and appropriately. Model and share strategies that support active listening behaviours, such as signalling when you want the child to listen.
	Plan activities that build upon and develop the child's listening skills. Chunk information and provide visual information to support the child's understanding. Allow children time to respond to questions. Repeat and clarify peer responses.
Difficulties with accessing certain speech sounds.	Be aware of which speech sounds the child can and can't hear and adapt teaching to take this into account. Deliver activities that demand careful listening in a quiet environment.
Difficulties maintaining attention and concentration during activities that include a lot of lip-reading and listening.	Be aware that group work is particularly challenging for deaf pupils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage pupils to talk one at a time.</li> <li>• Ask pupils to signal when they're about to talk.</li> <li>• Reduce background noise.</li> </ul> Think about the length and pace of learning sessions and offer listening breaks. Repeat and clarify peer responses and contributions. Provide visual information such as pictures and objects to support teaching points.

You should be aware of:	Teaching, learning and support strategies
<p>Delayed literacy skills and difficulties with grammar and spelling.</p>	<p>Support phonological awareness and access to speech sounds that may be difficult to hear or identify. Share texts and books before and after they're taught.</p> <p>Identify and teach unfamiliar vocabulary, colloquialisms, idioms and phrases.</p> <p>Draw attention to tense endings and function words deaf children may not hear.</p> <p>Use pictures and real-life events to stimulate ideas.</p> <p>Encourage children to talk through their ideas before writing.</p> <p>Use writing frames to help the child structure their ideas.</p> <p>Create word mats with key vocabulary or prompt sheets to support grammatical rules.</p> <p>Encourage children to review texts and select important information.</p> <p>Use specific programmes, resources and strategies to target areas of difficulty.</p> <p>Ask the Teacher of the Deaf or speech and language therapist to support you with this.</p> <p>Go to <b>[PAGE NUMBER]</b> to find out more about the role of a speech and language therapist.</p>
You should be aware of:	Teaching, learning and support strategies
<p>Challenges with working memory and auditory memory.</p>	<p>Carry out activities that support memory including 'Kim's game', repetition of key information such as times tables, days of the week and learning songs and rhymes.</p> <p>Break tasks into simple steps and make sure the child has mastered the first step before going on to the next.</p> <p>While they may understand what they are being asked, they still might not be able to do it.</p>

	<p>Use clear, specific language when making requests and, if appropriate, show the child what you want them to do.</p> <p>A donation has been made in your behalf to the National Deaf Children Society.</p> <p>Create a working memory prompt sheet to lessen the working memory load (for example, times tables, spelling rules or word mat).</p> <p>Encourage the child to ask for help.</p> <p>Ask peers to support with instructions and completing tasks to allow the child to get started straight away rather than wait for the teacher.</p> <p>Encourage the child to write down verbal information or draw picture/ take photos of important things they may need to remember.</p>
Difficulties with multitasking, for example, carrying out an activity while listening or lip-reading.	<p>Stop activity when delivering key information.</p> <p>Give more time to process information.</p> <p>Allow time for children to write down information before talking.</p> <p>Use communication support workers (CSWs) or learning assistants to record information, allowing the child to focus on listening.</p>
<b>You should be aware of:</b>	<b>Teaching, learning and support strategies</b>
Difficulties around incidental learning – deaf pupils may have a smaller or reduced knowledge of the world because they struggle to pick up what others are saying.	<p>Provide opportunities for pupils to talk about wider issues, such as non-routine events or days out, before they happen.</p> <p>Use books and texts as a springboard for discussing wider issues.</p> <p>Encourage children to ask questions and find answers.</p> <p>Encourage classmates to include deaf children fully in conversations and discussions.</p>
Social skills – deafness may cause difficulties with friendships, everyday social situations and responding appropriately in unfamiliar and new situations.	<p>Make sure peers are deaf aware and can communicate appropriately with the deaf pupil. Create opportunities for small group work and activities in which pupils can practise:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appropriately expressing emotions and ideas</li> <li>• asking for clarification from teachers and peers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying and avoiding situations that could lead to conflict</li> <li>• initiating social interactions</li> <li>• joining in an ongoing activity</li> <li>• maintaining self-control</li> <li>• negotiating with peers</li> <li>• recognising and responding appropriately to other people's emotions</li> <li>• recognising social cues</li> <li>• solving conflicts with peers.</li> </ul> <p>Teach vocabulary to support social language such as idioms, colloquialisms and slang.</p> <p>Make sure the pupil can access extracurricular activities.</p> <p>Deaf pupils may need specific teaching to learn how to see situations from other people's perspectives. This is known as Theory of Mind. Research suggests it can be delayed in deaf children. For more information on Theory of Mind and deafness see Chapter 10.</p>
<b>You should be aware of:</b>	<b>Teaching, learning and support strategies</b>
<p>Promoting deaf pupils' self-esteem and pupil voice. Deaf pupils may need support to develop resilience, feel confident about their deaf identity and advocate to have their needs met.</p>	<p>Make sure that disabilities including deafness are included in the curriculum. Promote the child's deaf identity through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing information to both the child and their family that supports their decision-making and enables them to be fully involved in their child's education, both formally and informally</li> <li>• providing opportunities for deaf children and their families to meet deaf peers, deaf adults and role models</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• explaining to children and their families how to explain and talk about their deafness so their needs are met</li><li>• supporting the development of resilience and problem-solving strategies when coming up against everyday challenges</li><li>• supporting their potential to be as independent as possible and lead a 'normal life'.</li></ul> <p>Fully include the deaf child in discussions, reviews, target-setting and decision-making using a range of strategies and resources.</p> <p>Use specific resources and training developed for supporting deaf children, for example, our Healthy Minds programme: <a href="http://www.ndcs.org.uk/healthyminds">www.ndcs.org.uk/healthyminds</a>.</p>
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**i** An effective school will understand the impact of deafness on learning and reduce this impact by using strategies and adaptations that support deaf pupils to achieve their academic potential.



## 3 Working together to support deaf children

### Early years settings

Much of the guidance on the communication and learning needs of deaf children, and on transition into and out of settings in this booklet, will be useful for anyone working with deaf children, regardless of the educational setting.

However, if you are working in one of the below educational settings please read our detailed guidance on supporting the achievement of deaf children in early years settings at [www.ndcs.org.uk/supporting-the-achievement-of-hearing-impaired-children-in-early-years-settings](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/supporting-the-achievement-of-hearing-impaired-children-in-early-years-settings).

- Parent and toddler group
- Nursery or playgroup
- Crèche
- Pre-school
- At home, if you are a childminder

Staff in these settings will have valuable childcare experience that will benefit deaf children. Because of their hearing loss, the deaf child will have particular needs that are different from hearing children. The guidance will help you to:

- make sure the environment and activities in your early years setting are accessible for deaf children
- enable the deaf child to make progress towards achieving early learning goals, particularly in the area of language development
- work closely with the families to fully understand the impact of the deafness on their development
- know where to go for extra support.

### A Deaf-friendly setting

It is very important that there is a 'whole school' approach to the education of deaf children. This means that all members of staff throughout the setting are aware of deaf children's needs and work alongside specialist professionals to ensure the best possible support. To be a deaf-friendly setting, there needs to be a positive attitude towards deafness and deaf issues. This can be achieved by making sure that the governors and senior managers are also firmly committed to supporting deaf pupils.

All staff working in primary and secondary settings should be aware of how to:

- identify the signs of deafness in a child
- understand the educational, social and developmental implications of deafness
- know how to support deaf children so they can achieve alongside their peers.

The lists below explain how different staff members can support the achievement and inclusion of deaf pupils. They focus on the roles that are specific to the needs resulting from pupils' deafness.

### Special Educational Needs Coordinator/Learning Support Co-ordinator (SENCo/LSC)

The SENCo (in future to be known as LSC) is responsible for coordinating the special educational provision made for the child and for any decisions made. Drawing on guidance from a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD), the SENCo will:

- ensure the setting receives all information on the pupil's deafness and its implications, before starting in September
- ensure the required hearing technologies, adjustments to the acoustic environment, classroom and support staff are in place for the start of term
- ensure all information about the pupil's needs and how to meet them is communicated to other staff
- ensure the setting works cooperatively with other health and education specialists who are supporting the pupil
- organise staff training, such as deaf awareness training
- ensure teaching assistants have the knowledge and skills to support the pupil, including at least a Level 3 Irish Sign Language (ISL) or British Sign Language (BSL) qualification or equivalent for pupils who require signed support
- find out what arrangements should be in place for testing and assessment
- ensure that information about the deaf pupil is available on the school portal for supply staff.

### Class or form teacher

The class teacher is responsible and accountable for the progress of all pupils in their class. They will need to:

- understand the child's capabilities and the impact of their deafness
- be aware of the pupil's communication needs and know how to communicate with them

- understand the pupil's needs and the implications for accessing lessons and activities
- adapt the teaching approach to ensure the pupil can access teaching and learning
- understand the benefits of hearing technologies and know how to use them
- make the necessary adaptations to ensure a good acoustic environment
- identify the pupil's social needs and support their social skills and friendships, and where appropriate offer pastoral support
- encourage peers to understand the pupil's needs and the support they can give
- facilitate effective links between the home and setting, encouraging parents to express any concerns or worries
- ensure behaviour management strategies take account of the pupil's deafness
- promote the development of independence skills

### Bursar or property manager

Makes changes to improve, for example, listening conditions in the setting such as improving room acoustics or installing soundfield systems. There is more information about soundfield systems in **Appendix 2**.

### School senior management

Promotes person-centred planning and an inclusive approach.

Make quality assurance arrangements to ensure deaf pupils are accessing teaching and learning (for example, tracking and classroom observation, pupil feedback).

### Teaching assistants' and communication support workers<sup>3</sup>

“Effective working with TAs should:

- raise the achievement of deaf pupils, narrowing any attainment gap with other children;
- enable the inclusion of deaf pupils in school activities;
- encourage independent learning.”

<sup>3</sup>This section summarises key points from *Raising the Achievement of Pupils with a Hearing Impairment: Effective working with teaching assistants in schools*, produced by the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) in 2012, available from <http://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/curriculum/teaching-assistant-guidance/410-01-teaching-assistant-guidance-for-hi>

## Communication support workers

Some deaf pupils may need additional communication support to access what the teacher and other pupils are saying. The teaching assistant can have an additional role as a Sign Language (BSL or ISL) interpreter but they may have a qualification in communication support and be referred to as a communication support worker (CSW). They will do this as well as their teaching assistant responsibilities.

### Working with a CSW: tips for teachers

- Remember there is a time lag between what you say and it being interpreted. So, for example, if you ask the class a question, allow the pupil time to watch the CSW and form a reply.
- Ensure the CSW has a copy of the lesson plan and resources (textbooks, videos etc.) you intend to use so that they can prepare and ask questions if they do not understand anything.
- Plan activities with regular breaks, as interpreting and reading an interpreter can be hard, tiring work.
- Speak directly to the pupil and not the interpreter.

Remember that the deaf pupil will be watching the CSW to access the lesson so try to avoid tasks that require divided attention. For example, if carrying out a demonstration, build in time so that the pupil can look at the demonstration and turn their attention back to the CSW, otherwise they will miss the explanation.

Make sure there is space for the CSW to stand near the pupil and the lighting is good.

The setting will need to be confident that communication support workers have good enough BSL/ISL skills to translate the curriculum and provide a fluent language model.<sup>4</sup>

When they start school, deaf pupils will have the level and type of support decided and arranged by the Teacher of the Deaf and SENCo.

### Involving the deaf pupil and their family

It is important to involve the deaf pupil and their family in determining the type of support they receive. Deaf children do best when settings work in partnership with parents. Settings can facilitate person-centred planning for deaf pupils through:

<sup>4</sup>The National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) recommends that a communication support worker should have a Level 3 qualification in BSL, which is roughly equivalent to an A-Level. Schools should seek specialist advice from a Teacher of the Deaf on this issue, where needed.

- actively seeking input from the pupil and their family about provision and support and providing appropriate facilities for meetings, such as a portable soundfield system or an interpreter for deaf family members
- providing information to others supporting the child on their progress – for example, informing the Teacher of the Deaf about how well personal hearing technology is working
- ensuring school staff have the time for necessary liaison with parents and other professionals who support the child
- contributing to multidisciplinary assessments and any resulting support plan.

**Keeping parents involved** – Parents must be kept well-informed about the provision for their child through regular review meetings where progress can be discussed.

It is important to plan with parents when and how they can expect to receive this information.

## Establishing good communication between the home and setting

Communicating everyday information between setting and home can be hard for deaf children who may miss or misunderstand verbal information or instructions. To help, you can:

- agree a regular way for staff to update parents by emailing, meeting or phoning
- send text messages to ask parents to look out for information coming home or when a pre-planned activity is imminent
- nominate a member of staff to ensure confidential information reaches parents in a secure way.

## Professionals who support deaf pupils may include the following:

### Teachers of the Deaf (ToD)

**“I have a Teacher of the Deaf who comes in and checks my progress in school once in a while. The extra support means that I am able to be educated at the same level as my classmates even if I need a little more help to understand the work. I think if I didn’t have this extra support in all my years I would not be where I am today.”**

– Pupil

In many areas, a child with a permanent moderate to profound hearing loss will receive regular support from a Teacher of the Deaf who has a mandatory qualification in deaf education. They may have supported the deaf child and their family since diagnosis.

A child with a mild temporary hearing loss or a loss in one ear may not meet the criteria for regular support, but the Teacher of the Deaf may be able to advise the setting on ways to meet their needs. The setting SENCo should contact the Education Authority's Sensory Service for advice or support.

### Speech and language therapist

Deaf pupils may also get support from a speech and language therapist, who will assess how well their speech, language and communication skills are developing. The speech and language therapist may work directly with the pupil or suggest programmes for the setting and family to implement. They monitor and assess the pupil's progress and suggest interventions and activities.

### Audiologists

Audiologists carry out hearing tests, determine the level and type of hearing loss a child has and discuss with parents the options available. They fit hearing aids and review the child's progress with their hearing aids.

Audiologists work with the Teacher of the Deaf or educational audiologist to ensure that the pupil's hearing technologies, for example, radio aids and hearing aids, are working together effectively.

### Educational audiologists

Educational audiologists are Teachers of the Deaf with an additional qualification in educational audiology and offer specialist advice on acoustics and hearing technologies.





## 4 Transitions

Starting school or pre-school is an exciting and challenging time for any child.

When working with deaf children, you will need to consider:

- new learning environments with varying quality in listening conditions
- managing hearing technologies throughout the day
- lots of new relationships and names
- varying deaf awareness levels among staff and pupils
- more demanding subject content and school-specific vocabulary
- making new friends
- differing expectations of behaviour and independence
- a longer and more demanding day.

### Contact prior to starting school

Meeting with the deaf child's family before they start school means you can gather important information about their needs and make sure they have a successful start to school. It gives you an opportunity to respond to any worries parents may have about their child starting at school. You will be able to plan for the family's needs and aspirations and help them to feel valued, welcomed and involved in their child's education.

Periods of change can be made less daunting if parents' views are respected and they feel that they have made a meaningful contribution to the move.



We have lots more information for parents on how they can help their child prepare for school at [www.ndcs.org.uk/preparingforprimary](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/preparingforprimary) and [www.ndcs.org.uk/preparingforsecondary](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/preparingforsecondary).

### The transition plan

Preparing for transition is key to a successful start to school. A good transition plan can help to identify and provide solutions to potential challenges and ensures a successful start to school. It should:

- be prepared well in advance of the pupil starting primary school to give time for the support arrangements to be put in place
- clearly identify the staff member responsible for preparing the plan and coordinating its implementation

- involve the child and their family and use information they have from specialist assessments to inform the content.

It may include:

- employment of learning support assistant or CSW
- staff training on deafness
- visits for the whole family to the new setting
- provision of photos of key staff and school areas
- opportunities for the child to talk about their hearing loss and be able to ask for help with hearing technologies
- opportunities for the child to practice managing and monitoring hearing technologies
- arrangements for promoting and supporting social development
- identification of a member of staff responsible for preparing the plan and coordinating its implementation
- aspirations of the deaf pupils and their family
- thorough analysis of the pupil's needs and strengths including specialist assessments.



**Example checklist for collecting information to support the transfer from the early years setting.**

### Transition plan

**Pupil name:**

**Early years setting:**

**Early years setting contact:**

**Parents:**

**Teacher of the Deaf:**

**Teacher in charge of coordinating plan:**

<b>Hearing and personal technology</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>Type and level of deafness</p> <p>Un-aided hearing level</p> <p>Aided hearing level</p> <p>Listening in different environments (for example, classrooms or hallways)</p> <p>Sounds or words that are difficult to hear</p> <p>Personal hearing technology used</p> <p>When it is used</p> <p>How well the pupil uses it</p>	<p>What needs to be done to improve access to sound? For example, providing radio aids, improving acoustics, using soundfield systems.</p> <p>What needs to be done to make sure hearing technologies are being used correctly and well? For example, daily checks by staff of batteries, tubing etc and developing the pupil's skills in managing their own technology.</p> <p>What are the health and safety implications, for example, fire drills?</p>
<b>Communication and Language</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>Preferred way of communicating in different locations and situations (class, home, with friends)</p> <p>Competence in preferred way of communicating</p> <p>Lip-reading ability</p>	<p>What needs to be done in class to support access to teaching and learning including, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seating position to allow for lip-reading</li> <li>• ensuring good acoustics</li> <li>• using radio aids</li> <li>• using a soundfield system</li> <li>• advice/training for teachers</li> <li>• providing CSWs with Level 3 BSL or ISL qualification for pupils who use BSL or ISL.</li> </ul>

<b>Language</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Levels of understanding of language Level of expressive language Vocabulary level Reading level Writing level Social interaction and use of language	How does this compare with hearing pupils? What are the implications for learning? For example, more processing time? If a gap exists, what targets should be set to close the gap and what support or interventions are required to achieve them? What are the implications for teaching?
<b>Cognition</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Non-verbal cognitive skills to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make sure teachers have informed expectations</li> <li>• check whether there are other underlying learning difficulties.</li> </ul>	What needs to be done ensure that teachers have the right expectation and aspirations? What needs to be done to address any other underlying difficulties the pupil may be experiencing?
<b>Progress in curricular areas</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Progress in different curricular and extracurricular areas	Is more support required in particular areas? What targets need to be set?

<p>Are there particular strengths?</p> <p>Are there particular difficulties?</p>	
<b>Social and emotional wellbeing</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>Level of social interaction in class/school friendship groups</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of their hearing loss (the deaf child's understanding and other children's understanding)</p> <p>Ability to manage their learning needs</p>	<p>If levels of social interaction are low how can they be increased?</p> <p>What is their preferred friendship group?</p> <p>Do other pupils need deaf awareness training and information on how to communicate with the deaf pupil?</p> <p>Would the pupil benefit from meeting other deaf pupils?</p> <p>Is the pupil able to self-advocate?</p>
<b>Pupil's views</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>What are the pupil's hopes, aspirations and concerns about moving to a new school?</p> <p>What information and help do they think they need to support their move to a new school?</p>	<p>What information and opportunities are needed to help with the move?</p>

<b>Parent's Views</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>What are the parents' hopes, aspirations and concerns about their child moving to a new school?</p> <p>What information and help do they think they need to support their child's move to a new school?</p>	<p>What information and opportunities are needed to help with the move, such as additional visits?</p>
<b>Other considerations</b>	
<b>Information required</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>Any other considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other difficulties or medical conditions or medical needs</li> <li>• attendance issues</li> <li>• behaviour issues.</li> </ul>	

## Sharing information

Once all the relevant information has been collected by the SENCo, the summary information should be shared with school staff. The following example information sheet could be distributed to staff (with the agreement of the pupil's parents).

<b>Photo</b>	<p><b>General information</b></p> <p><b>Pupil:</b> Ben Thomas</p> <p><b>Year:</b> 3</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> Mr Jones</p> <p><b>SENCo:</b> Mrs Taylor</p>
<p><b>Hearing loss and hearing technology</b></p> <p>Ben has a severe sensorineural hearing loss in both ears and uses hearing aids and a radio aid.</p>	
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Ben uses spoken English, but he has delayed language. He needs to be able to see the teacher's face at all times.</p>	
<p><b>Learning and access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ben will need to be sitting on the table closest to the front of the class so he can see the smart board and the teacher at all times.</li> <li>• Anyone speaking needs to use the radio aid – this includes children speaking.</li> <li>• You to check with Ben that all his equipment is working as he might not say if something is wrong.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Remember:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ben may not say if he doesn't understand.</li> <li>• Ben may need extra time to answer questions.</li> <li>• Ben might not hear other children's comments or answers so please repeat these.</li> <li>• Ben may not understand or know certain vocabulary. Identify any new words or phrases before the lesson, which can be shared with his family and Mrs Taylor.</li> </ul>	

## Personal passports

Some parents of deaf children may have prepared a 'personal passport' or an 'information card', containing key information about themselves and their needs. They can range from small, laminated cards that can be attached to a lanyard or a locker key and shown to 'new' people, to A4 sheets of paper with more detailed information.

We've given an example of a personal passport below and you can find more at [www.ndcs.org.uk/passport](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/passport).

**Angela-Marie Douglas**

I use a hearing aid.

**It helps if you...**

- face me when talking
- check I have understood what you've said
- use some simple signs to help me understand
- know it's harder for me to listen when there's lots of background noise.

**When using the radio aid...**

- remember to mute it when you're not talking to me
- be careful not to let anything brush against or hit the microphone.

**i An effective school will:**

- recognise the additional challenges that deaf children may face in starting formal education
- make sure that it has all the necessary information from the early years setting, other relevant professionals and parents well in advance of the transfer
- develop a transfer plan that identifies a lead member of staff responsible for ensuring that the move is successful for the deaf pupil, and that all the necessary provision is in place for the first day of term
- ensure that the transfer plan sets out what support needs to be provided to meet the deaf pupil's needs and that it's put in place – this includes ensuring that any necessary training is provided
- distribute relevant information on the deaf child to staff
- continue to monitor the success of the transfer through feedback from school staff, the deaf child and their family.

## Starting at the new setting

**Familiarisation/taster days should be carefully planned** to enable the deaf pupil to take part fully in the activities provided and get to know key members of staff. The deaf pupils and their family may benefit from additional visits and access to photos of members of staff, maps and timetables.

**Think about which form/class the deaf pupil is placed in.** Is the teaching space a good listening and communication environment? Is the deaf child with members of their friendship group? At the start of term, deaf awareness training for all pupils is a great welcome for the deaf pupil.

**Deaf awareness training for staff** should take place prior to the start of the academic year so that the deaf pupil can feel confident in the support provided from the first day at the new school.

**Planning for specialist hearing technology and improvements to acoustics** should be in place before the deaf pupil transfers to the new setting. There should be opportunities for the child to talk about their deafness and to practice managing and monitoring hearing technologies.

**Opportunities for supporting and developing friendships** and attending activities and events outside the curriculum should be planned for .

**Meetings and ongoing liaison with the family and key professionals** should be scheduled during the transition phase, to ensure the transfer of working knowledge and information.



If the deaf young person is considering their post-16 options, we have lots of information to help you support the pupil plan for their future, whether they want to stay in education, enter the world of work or do something else, like travelling or volunteering. Visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/post16](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/post16).

# 5 Listening and communication

This chapter explains how you can make it easier for deaf pupils to listen and communicate in educational settings through:

- the use of hearing technology
- good communication skills
- creating good listening environments
- promoting effective communication throughout the setting.

## Hearing technology

Many deaf children use personal hearing technologies such as hearing aids, cochlear implants and bone conduction hearing devices to support their access to spoken language and sound. Remember that hearing technologies do not correct hearing.

It is essential that:

- a child's hearing technology is always working
- hearing technology is used both in and outside the classroom
- all staff understand the uses and limitations of hearing technologies and can support the child to use them both appropriately and sensitively
- a member of staff is trained to maintain and monitor the hearing technology daily, check for faults and troubleshoot.

A Teacher of the Deaf from the Sensory Service in the Education Authority can provide training for school staff.

 There are a series of how-to films to support this work available at [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7B1043ABAEC9A100](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7B1043ABAEC9A100).

Making sure all members of your school community are familiar with the pupil's technology and how to use it will make a big difference to the deaf pupil.

Below is an example of information that could be included.

**Example: Notes to staff**

Hearing loss and hearing technology	
<p><b>Priya:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is profoundly deaf</li> <li>• wears two hearing aids</li> <li>• uses a radio aid in all lessons (see attached guidelines)</li> <li>• uses your face and lip patterns to supplement her hearing.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Priya can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hear speech sounds and follow a simple one-to-one conversation in a quiet environment</li> <li>• take out her hearing aids and put them in with support</li> <li>• tell you if the radio aid isn't working.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support for Priya:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priya won't hear you when you're talking to the class if you're not using the radio aid, so turn it on before you talk and make sure she is looking at you.</li> <li>• She will need an adult in her group for group discussion work to make sure all the other children are following the deaf awareness rules they've been taught.</li> <li>• Priya will need help to change her batteries. They're kept in the desk drawer.</li> </ul>



You can find more information on hearing technology in **Appendix 2**. Our resource *Hearing Aids: Information for families* gives more detailed information about hearing aids and how to look after them. Visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsguide](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsguide).

**Radio aids**

Many deaf pupils benefit from using a radio aid with their main hearing technology. Radio aids reduce problems caused by background noise and when there is a distance between the speaker and pupil. They do this by carrying the teacher's voice directly via a microphone to a receiver attached to the pupil's hearing technology. The Sensory Service can advise on radio aids.

**“The radio aid has dramatically improved my child’s life at school and she would not want to be without one in an education setting. The radio aid is used every day in school and all the teachers are able to use this simple but effective device.”**

- Parent

When using radio aids, teachers should:

- switch the transmitter on when talking to the whole class or a group in which the deaf pupil is working
- wear the microphone about 15cm from the mouth
- switch it off or mute the microphone when having a conversation that the deaf pupil does not need to hear (the signal can travel some distance and even through some walls)
- avoid standing in a noisy place, such as next to an overhead projector or open window, as the microphone will pick up background noise and transmit this to the deaf pupil
- avoid letting the microphone knock against clothing or jewellery
- make the handover and return of any hearing technology during lessons as smooth and inconspicuous as possible
- ask the Teacher of the Deaf about leads from the radio aid to audio equipment such as the interactive whiteboard, soundfield system or computer.



**We offer deaf children, their families and the professionals working with them the opportunity to borrow radio aids and try them out in their own home or at school through our Technology Test Drive: [www.ndcs.org.uk/test-drive](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/test-drive).**



**For further information download our resource, *How Radio Aids Can Help*, at [www.ndcs.org.uk/radioaids](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/radioaids).**

### Soundfield system

A soundfield system can make it easier for the pupil to hear your voice wherever you are in the room. Your voice is amplified via a microphone to a base station placed within the room. This amplifies and enhances the speech and then broadcasts it from speakers positioned around the room. Portable systems are available.



For more information on the range of equipment available for deaf children and young people at school, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/technology](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/technology).

## The communication environment

A good communication environment is crucial for children to be able to learn and socialise. Even a mild hearing loss can result in children missing up to 50% of everyday classroom language.<sup>5</sup> Settings provide a wide variety of excellent opportunities for every pupil to develop their communication and language skills.

Here are some simple strategies that can be used to optimise the communication environment.

- Take the time to find out how the deaf pupil prefers to communicate.
- Find out simple things, such as a preferred seating position, which support the deaf child to access learning.
- Make sure that you have the deaf pupil's attention before you start talking.
- Speak clearly and at your normal level and pace – speaking too slowly or exaggerating mouth patterns will make you harder to understand.
- Allow the deaf pupil to see your face and lips when speaking – putting something in front of your face or turning to the smart board will make it difficult for them to lip-read.
- Make sure you are not standing with your back to a light source as a shadow cast across your face can obstruct the deaf pupil's view.
- Check that the pupil understands what has been said in a sensitive way, for example asking questions such as 'Who can tell me what we are going to need for this lesson?' or repeating or rephrasing if needed.
- When working with a CSW, make sure the deaf pupil can see you both. Speak directly to the pupil, not the CSW.
- Allow time for pupils to move their attention between you and other information when you speak so they can use your facial cue and lip patterns to help them understand.
- If you need to turn off the lights (for example to watch a DVD), make sure all spoken instructions or explanations are given beforehand.
- Repeat any questions that other pupils in the classroom may have raised before answering them.

<sup>5</sup> Ear Foundation. *Research on Experiences of Children with Mild and Moderate Deafness*. 2015. National Deaf Children's Society, London.

- Seek advice from a Teacher of the Deaf on ways of communicating to meet the child's needs, for example, where English is an additional language or the pupil has additional needs.

**“People face the wrong way when talking.”**

- Pupil

### Involving peers

Being able to communicate with friends and peers is key to promoting deaf children's mental health social development and helping them to feel fully included. To help with this, teachers can:

- support classmates to be 'deaf aware'
- ensure that all pupils in the class understand how background noise affects the listening environment and how to communicate with the deaf pupil
- encourage deaf pupils and classmates to let each other know when there is a breakdown in communication and how to re-establish it
- support social situations and identify when interventions and social groups would be helpful
- if the deaf pupil signs, help other children to develop signing skills – signed speech can also clarify and reinforce linguistic understanding for all pupils
- in agreement with the deaf pupil, select nominated hearing peers or 'hearing buddies' who can explain rules
- set up 'quiet zones' inside and outside the school where deaf pupils can go to communicate with their friends.

**“I have to explain what my hearing aids are all the time.”**

- Pupil



Our short films for mainstream schools cover all aspects of deaf awareness within a school and include interviews with deaf pupils, their parents and school staff. For primary schools [www.ndcs.org.uk/heretolearn](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/heretolearn) and for secondary schools [www.ndcs.org.uk/secondaryschoolvideos](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/secondaryschoolvideos).

### Creating a good listening environment

**“... the noise people make around me in class – it gives me headaches and I don't like it. If I can't hear what is happening in class, I don't understand what to do.”**

- Pupil



**No technology can replace normal hearing. It is most effective when there is a good listening environment. The listening environment in a typical classroom can be very poor. To listen to what it can sound like for a deaf pupil in a classroom visit our webpage [www.ndcs.org.uk/simulation](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/simulation).**

A good listening environment benefits all pupils. Deaf pupils will have trouble in learning when:

- there is a lot of reverberation and echo in a room (i.e. poor acoustics). Reverberation happens when sound bounces off hard surfaces. This distorts what is heard through the hearing technology worn by the deaf pupil
- background noise drowns out the voice of the teacher.

Remember, children are less likely than adults to be able to work out what is being said in noisy environments.

### Encourage active listening

Hearing is not the same as listening because listening involves the brain. Active listening is when the child hears sound and then turns this into useful information.

There are many education resources available including posters, labels, worksheets, rhymes, widgets, picture prompts and encouragement charts, which can promote listening skills within the classroom. Think about promoting and developing listening skills through:

- asking pupils to listen out for pictures or words
- playing listening games on a regular basis – these can be provided by education suppliers but could be made by a teaching assistant to include routines and classroom instructions
- using the suggestions in this resource to adapt teaching strategies and enhance the listening experiences of the deaf pupil in your class
- asking and observing the deaf pupil to build up a picture of their listening experience at school. When specific problems are identified, respond promptly and make adaptations to improve listening conditions.

### Promoting effective communication across the setting

Adaptations can be made to improve acoustics throughout the setting.

School managers should liaise with the Teacher of the Deaf or educational audiologist to ensure the school building meets the national minimum standard on acoustics. All teaching spaces should be regularly assessed, and adaptations put in place to reduce reverberation and background noise.

Settings can help reduce reverberation by:

- fitting curtains, carpets or blinds
- installing specialist acoustic treatments in rooms, for example, acoustic tiles, panels and door seals
- putting rubber tips or ‘hush ups’ on the bottom of chair and table legs
- using display drapes on walls
- covering hard surfaces with fabric
- padding the bottom of trays or pencil and pen pots with felt or foam.

Schools might also consider introducing a soundfield system to improve listening conditions. These systems are designed to improve listening conditions for all pupils in the classroom and in a hall. They can be used with or without hearing aids or cochlear implants. More information about soundfield systems can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### Reducing background noise

Teachers can reduce background noise by doing the following.

<p>Closing doors to noisy areas or corridors.</p>	<p>Introducing classroom strategies that can establish and maintain a quiet working atmosphere within the classroom, including good behaviour management.</p>
<p>Closing windows to outside noise and closing curtains and blinds if necessary.</p>	<p>Encouraging pupils to develop an understanding of how classroom noises such as chairs scraping, doors banging, dropping objects, shouting and so on can interfere with what their deaf peer can hear.</p>
<p>Positioning full bookshelves and cupboards against partition walls (to minimise noise transfer from other rooms).</p>	<p>Liaising with colleagues in shared open-plan teaching areas, so as not to start a quiet reading session when the neighbouring class begins their music lesson, for example.</p>
<p>Raising awareness of noisy equipment such as heating or air conditioning systems.</p>	
<p>Turning off IT equipment such as interactive whiteboards, computers and overhead projectors, when not in use.</p>	

**“I used to be frightened by loud noises and the sound of hand dryers in toilets. It is still difficult for me to deal with people who are shouting; the noise is very loud.”**

- Pupil

Setting managers should:

- liaise with the Teacher of the Deaf or educational audiologist to ensure that all teaching spaces for deaf pupils are assessed and any required adaptations are made before the child starts school
- ensure new school buildings meet national minimum standards on acoustics and take note of the standards when considering improvements to school buildings
- ensure improvements in the listening environment are part of the setting's longer-term plan for improving its accessibility for all pupils
- ensure that staff are implementing all the lower cost adaptations to reduce reverberation and background noise (see above).



**For top tips for teachers to help make their classroom into a better listening environment and improve the attainment of deaf pupils, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/goodlisteningconditions](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/goodlisteningconditions).**



## 6 High or first quality teaching

Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress of all pupils in their care. Pupils who are deaf cover the whole range of ability. They have the same potential to attain and achieve as any other pupil given the right levels of support.

Most teaching and learning takes place through seeing and hearing. Deaf pupils are likely to need extra support to make the same progress as other pupils of a similar age and cognitive ability.

Teachers will need to make adaptations and put strategies in place to:

- manage and minimise the impact of deafness on the child's learning
- develop metacognitive (awareness and understanding of your own thought processes) and learning skills
- provide access to the curriculum
- ensure deaf pupils can achieve their academic, emotional and social potential.

### High quality teaching checklist



The checklist below sets out how to promote inclusive practice and remove challenges specific to deaf pupils.

Adaptations and strategies	Observations
Seat pupils carefully so they can see you and also see their peers.	
Remember hearing technologies work less well over distance – consider using a radio aid.	
Gain pupil's attention before giving important information.	
Keep background noise to a minimum.	
Slow down speech rate a little, but keep natural fluency.	
Use rich and varied language but repeat and clarify when necessary.	

Make sure you are confident using and managing the pupil's hearing technology.	
Allow more thinking and talking time.	
Model and teach active listening along with signals for when careful listening is required.	
Don't stand in front of a window.	
Repeat contributions from other children – their voices may be softer and speech unclear.	
Encourage peers to signal when they are about to talk.	
When appropriate check that oral information or instructions have been understood.	
Face the pupil when speaking – they may be using your lip patterns.	
Keep hands away from your mouth.	
Provide the pupil with key vocabulary to use before or during the lesson.	
Divide listening time into relatively short chunks.	

## Visual supports

Visual supports help the deaf pupil to learn and access information, taking the pressure off being reliant on listening and speech or lip-reading. Visual supports illustrate new concepts and vocabulary, support visual memory skills and reinforce what has been learnt.

Wherever possible:

- support stories, songs and rhymes, instructions, class routines, trips out, the setting environment, spoken explanation and written texts with visual materials
- use real objects, story bags, puppets, photos, pictures, diagrams, illustrations, objects and artefacts to support learning and understanding
- point clearly to the visual clues you are using and when other members of the class refer to them during discussion

- use PowerPoint presentations via the interactive whiteboard to incorporate visual images supporting teaching
- use display work to consolidate and develop understanding – displays with pictures and captions provide important visual clues. It may also be useful to have a small whiteboard to hand so illustrations can be made to reinforce understanding
- use visual timetables and graphic organisers to support the child to understand and follow school routines
- use photo books to share information about home and setting
- allow enough time for the deaf pupil to look at the visual material before you start talking again – this gives them time to focus their attention back on you.

## Vocabulary resources and support handouts

Deaf pupils may have reduced vocabulary in comparison to their hearing peers because they have fewer opportunities to overhear new and unfamiliar language. Strategies to support vocabulary include:

- identifying and teaching key vocabulary
- making topic or knowledge mats in which new vocabulary is embedded in context and learning.
- creating graphic organisers – also known as a knowledge maps, concept maps or story maps – using visual symbols to express knowledge, concepts, thoughts or ideas and the relationships between them.



More examples of topic mats and graphic organisers can be found on the EAL Nexus website at [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/guidance/effective-teaching-of-eal-learners/great-ideas](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/guidance/effective-teaching-of-eal-learners/great-ideas).

Twinkl also produce activities and games designed to develop British Sign Language, vocabulary and working memory, records and information sheets for audiology and resources to widen knowledge of deafness at [www.twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk).

## Pre- and post-teaching

- Pre-teach to introduce new vocabulary and concepts. Post-teach to consolidate work covered.

- Sharing a book, text or key vocabulary and concepts before a lesson helps deaf pupils feel able to participate more fully in lessons.
- Revisiting a book or new vocabulary and concepts helps children and staff identify and fill in missing knowledge.
- Pre- and post-teaching should be part of the taught curriculum. Children should not be missing other learning opportunities such as PE or socialising opportunities such as break times.

## Small group work/teaching

Deaf children benefit from learning in small groups. It is an ideal opportunity to practice turn taking, social skills and discussion techniques. However, group working can also be very challenging so it is important to follow some simple rules, such as:

- think about the listening environment and position the group where there is a minimum of background noise and distractions
- make sure the deaf child can see the faces of all the children in the group
- make sure all hearing technologies are being used – the radio aid can be placed in the centre of the group or passed to the speaker
- teach the children to signal or identify who they are before they speak
- encourage children to speak one at a time
- repeat or clarify what has been said
- use a prompt sheet or remind children of the 'group rules' at the beginning of the session.

## Group reading

This should be adapted for deaf pupils as per the group work guidelines. It can also help to:

- show the pupil the text before the lesson and, if necessary, go through it in a pre-tutoring session
- use a radio aid round the group, passing the transmitter between readers
- use a 'buddy' system where a hearing peer helps the pupil keep track of the text
- be aware that the child may feel anxious due to poor speech intelligibility
- make it clear when reading is stopped to discuss a specific point.

## Using video clips

Deaf pupils may find it difficult to access spoken information from video clips because of the sound quality or lack of lip patterns. When possible:

- use the pupil's radio aid or streamer to provide direct access to sound
- make sure that any video clips you show are subtitled. If no subtitles are available, you should provide a transcript
- use the automatic subtitling function for YouTube videos but be aware that there may be errors so check the quality of subtitles before showing a clip. Download our factsheet for more information on captions and subtitles and how to make online resources more accessible for deaf pupils at [www.ndcs.org.uk/accessible-resources](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/accessible-resources)
- discuss the content you plan to watch with teaching assistants or support workers, giving them time to watch it and discuss any key points or vocabulary with the pupil
- some pupils might benefit from watching the content before or after the lesson, with their support worker or at home
- if appropriate, get a transcript or summary of the content (give plenty of notice as it takes time to transcribe)
- stop the video clips to allow notes to be taken – the pupil may miss information if they take notes while watching.

## Making online content and remote learning accessible for deaf pupils

More and more content is now shared online. Online learning offers challenges and opportunities for all pupils, and it's worth remembering that it can happen both remotely and in the classroom. Remote online learning has similar opportunities and challenges, but learners do not have access to the same social contact and support. This may negatively impact on deaf children who are at risk of greater isolation due to their communication and language needs.



We have lots more information on how to make online resources accessible to deaf children here: [www.ndcs.org.uk/remote-learning-checklist](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/remote-learning-checklist).

## Hands-on experience

Activities which involve hands-on learning will particularly benefit deaf children as they will bring the learning to life and allow a more visual approach to learning. Allow time for deaf pupils to watch what you are doing and then listen to instructions.

## Classroom displays

The pictures, captions and information used by teachers to consolidate learning for the class will particularly benefit deaf pupils as they also provide opportunities for ‘incidental learning’ that deaf pupils may not pick up through overhearing.

## Notetaking

Deaf pupils will find it difficult to lip-read the teacher and/or follow signing by the communication support worker and record information at the same time. The teaching assistant can record information, enabling the deaf pupil to concentrate on the content of the lesson. Information can be recorded in an age-appropriate way, for example, pictures on a whiteboard can be used in post-tutoring sessions or sent home for reinforcement.

## Mind maps

Mind maps are an excellent way to present and record information pictorially for deaf pupils. This method can be learnt in age-appropriate stages to present or support the concepts being taught during a lesson, and to check the deaf pupil’s understanding of what has been taught.

## Time to think

As the deaf pupil’s auditory memory may not be as well developed as other pupils it is important to:

- build processing time into lessons, particularly if they contain new information or a ‘question and answer’ session
- include opportunities for repetition in lesson time
- avoid overloading lessons with too much information or too much talk.

## Reducing fatigue

Deaf children have to expend more concentration on listening. This can result in them tiring more quickly than their peers.

Try to:

- timetable lessons that need the most concentration for the morning session
- get to know what teaching methods or activities the deaf pupil finds most tiring – build in breaks and adapt activities to include tasks that do not solely rely on lip-reading

- keep oral instructions to a minimum – break down periods of spoken input into smaller sections within the overall lesson
- become familiar with signs of tiredness and fatigue so that you can intervene before the deaf pupil becomes frustrated.

## Setting homework

Deaf pupils tell us that homework is often set when background noise is high, for example, at the end of a lesson.

Teachers should make sure that information about homework, including deadlines, is communicated clearly at a quiet point in the lesson with time allowed for questions. Deaf pupils will benefit from having their homework written down on paper or on the smartboard.

## Children who speak English as an additional language (EAL)

According to the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE) 2021, 5% of deaf children in Northern Ireland use an additional spoken language other than English in education. Adaptations and strategies need to be implemented to ensure that the child is able to access the curriculum. These adaptations and strategies include:

- specialist support including from teachers, Teachers of the Deaf and support assistants
- improving the acoustic environment and minimising background noise
- consistent and effective use of hearing technologies
- differentiation of the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual learner
- effective pre- and post-tutoring, repetition, checking for understanding and the use of visual supports among others
- careful and consistent assessment and ongoing monitoring
- focused individual and small group activities to allow for learning in a smaller and quieter environment
- securing the involvement of parents in the child's learning.



**Our resource *Supporting the achievement of deaf children who use English as an additional language*, produced with support from The Bell Foundation, provides information and resources to help you to meet the needs of deaf EAL learners. It is available at [www.ndcs.org.uk/eal](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/eal).**

## 7

## Assessments, tests, exams and access arrangements

Schools, colleges, universities and awarding bodies are all subject to laws that mean arrangements must be put in place for deaf students to access assessments and exams.

Access arrangements involve adjusting the way that assessments and tests are written or assessed. This is important for deaf pupils because they may have difficulties with language because of their deafness. It might be harder for them to be sure what they are being asked or to show what they know. One example of an access arrangement might be to give the pupil a short break to help with concentration fatigue.



We have information for deaf children and young people aged 8 to 18, about asking for reasonable adjustments at school and college on the Buzz at [www.buzz.org.uk/articles/reasonable-adjustments-school-college-secondary](http://www.buzz.org.uk/articles/reasonable-adjustments-school-college-secondary).

### When should access arrangements be made?

Not all deaf pupils require access arrangements; it will depend on the individual pupil and their deafness. The Teacher of the Deaf can advise on this.

Access arrangements should be discussed early so the pupil knows what to expect and the setting can decide. Access arrangements must reflect how the pupil usually works. This is so the access arrangements are familiar to them and they know what to expect.



For further advice and information on exam and assessment access and adaptations visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/examaccessNI](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/examaccessNI).



Specific information for Northern Ireland is available from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) at [www.ccea.org.uk/examiner-centre-support/examinations-support/pre-examination-information/access-arrangements-and](http://www.ccea.org.uk/examiner-centre-support/examinations-support/pre-examination-information/access-arrangements-and) and from the EA Sensory Service at [Exam Access Arrangements Guideline \(Deaf\) \(eani.org.uk\)](http://Exam Access Arrangements Guideline (Deaf) (eani.org.uk)).

## Exemptions

Sometimes a child's needs, and the nature of the exam, will mean that it's not possible to adjust the exam without fundamentally changing what's being assessed. For example, some deaf young people might be unable to access the speaking and listening part of an English GCSE, but support such as a BSL or ISL interpreter would be inappropriate because the young person wouldn't be displaying an understanding of the language in which they were being examined. Where no adjustment can be made, the deaf child might be given an exemption.

Remember, assessments which are completed online in which children follow spoken instructions may not be accessible to deaf children unless adaptations can be made. These could include:

- subtitles
- using technology such as audio input leads or a radio aid to boost the sound signal
- provision of a written transcript, which can be read to the pupil allowing them access to lip patterns and extra processing time.

## Specialist assessments

Specialist assessments for deaf learners fall into two areas.

1. Access to learning to make sure deaf children are fully included in education.
2. Supporting the development of skills that allow children and young people to make decisions about their learning and become independent and autonomous learners.

Areas of development known to be at risk because of early childhood deafness will need regular assessment and benefit from early identification and early intervention.



**We have produced a resource to support professionals in assessing and monitoring the progress of deaf young people in communication, language, listening, literacy, numeracy, cognitive development and social and emotional wellbeing. The resource is available at [www.ndcs.org.uk/assessments](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/assessments).**



# 8

## Supporting emotional health and wellbeing

A deaf child with good emotional health and wellbeing:

- feels good about themselves
- has an appropriate level of independence and feels able to influence the world around them
- has positive and warm relationships with others
- is resilient and able to bounce back from setbacks and move on from negative experiences
- has the language and communication skills to be able to express and understand their emotions
- acknowledges their deafness and is confident when dealing with any challenges they may face
- never apologises for being deaf.

**"The school as a whole is very deaf aware, with the other children learning to sign, so interaction is good. One good thing the school does is the Christmas play. The children conduct the play and/or songs in sign, which is fantastic. The children do not feel excluded from the school as a whole. We are really pleased with things so far."**

- Parent



Our resource *What are you feeling?* is a guide to help deaf children understand and identify their emotions. You can download this resource from [www.ndcs.org.uk/whatareyoufeeling](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/whatareyoufeeling).

Emotional health and wellbeing in deaf pupils is influenced by several factors, including:

- Attitudes towards the pupil's deafness.
  - › Do setting policies and procedures reflect deaf pupils' needs, including communication needs?
  - › Are deaf pupils represented and fully included in all activities, both in the setting and out?
  - › Are there positive images of deafness in school?

- Approaches to language and communication. Many opportunities to socialise take place in the noisiest parts of the school, where deaf pupils are more likely to struggle to hear.
  - › Are there quiet places both inside and out where pupils can socialise one to one or in small groups?
  - › Does the child misunderstand current social language or worry about mishearing and misunderstanding?
  - › Are there opportunities for the child and their classmates to learn sign language?
- Knowledge of pragmatic language and social communication skills.
  - › Does the deaf child understand others' viewpoints and perceptions? This is known as Theory of Mind and research suggests it can be delayed in deaf children.
  - › Does the child understand jokes and sarcasm?
  - › Are there opportunities to rehearse common social situations, for example a social skills group?
- Conversations about feelings. Social acceptance requires an understanding of social norms but hearing pupils acquire these by incidental learning experiences, which deaf pupils are less likely to have.
  - › Deaf children may need specific teaching to understand situations from other people's perspectives. This is known as Theory of Mind and research suggests it can be delayed in deaf children.
- Family attitudes to deafness. Sometimes families struggle to accept their child's deafness and/or their hearing technology. Remember the most important influence on a deaf child's life is their family, therefore the emotional health and wellbeing of everyone in the family is also very important.
  - › Does the child's family also need support?
- Peer attitudes towards deafness. Deaf pupils say that it's helpful if their peers understand the problems presented by deafness and how to support them.
  - › Has the Teacher of the Deaf delivered peer awareness training?
  - › Have you asked deaf pupils to talk about their deafness and what helps them as part of a deaf awareness session?

**“I think people should be more aware of deafness but accept that it can be hard to understand if you have not had experience of it.”**

- Pupil



**Our website offers plenty of information and advice on how to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of both yourself and your child at [www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing).**

## Building resilience

It is important for deaf children to have a positive self-image and be resilient. This will help them to deal with social situations and getting their needs met in the wider world. Setting staff can help pupils be resilient and have a positive self-image by:

- **letting deaf pupils know that other children can also make mistakes**, mishear or misunderstand and require time out. Deaf pupils may find it helpful to know they have similar experiences to their peers and that they are not the only one in class needing support
- **supporting deaf pupils to have the correct language to talk about their deafness** and providing opportunities to tell other members of the school community what will help them
- **providing opportunities for deaf children to practice their social skills** safely in small groups
- **teaching pupils strategies that will help them cope** with the unpredictable world outside school, particularly in relation to their deafness
- **ensuring that visual aids, stories and other resources reflect the diversity of people** in the community, which includes deaf children
- **providing opportunities to meet other deaf children and deaf adults** – parents or local deaf groups may be able to help provide these opportunities
- **supporting deaf children to correctly 'label' their feelings.**



Our Healthy Minds programme explores good emotional health and wellbeing for deaf young people. Tackling issues such as low self-esteem, isolation, stress and anxiety, it encourages deaf young people to use positive strategies for dealing with change, managing their deafness, developing their self-esteem and confidence and building a repertoire of social skills. For more information on Healthy Minds visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/healthyminds](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/healthyminds).



Our website signposts to a range of resources to help professionals keep deaf children safe from harm or abuse, including our resources on online safety and preventing bullying. These are available at: [www.ndcs.org.uk/bullyingadvice](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/bullyingadvice).

## Theory of Mind

Many deaf pupils may have a delayed understanding of the thoughts, beliefs, intentions and emotions of other people, and perhaps themselves. This is known as Theory of Mind. Sometimes deaf children aren't challenged in their Theory of Mind abilities as a result of their deafness, but as a result of the potentially restricting environments they may live and learn in. Having age-appropriate skills helps to safeguard deaf children and supports their abilities to make effective social connections with others.

Strategies to support Theory of Mind include:

- sharing books and talking about the characters and what they are thinking and feeling
- using language about thinking such as “I wonder why” or “what do you think might happen?”
- helping the pupil to think about what someone is thinking or feeling about someone else
- developing higher level language skills to understand what others' mean when they are not speaking literally
- explicit teaching of figurative language, including metaphors, idioms and sarcasm
- think-alouds – where the pupil is asked to say out loud what they are thinking about when reading, solving math problems, or simply responding to questions posed by adults or their peers.

## Pupil voice

It is important to engage with, listen to and involve deaf pupils in decision-making on a wide range of topics including learning, teaching, equipment, keeping healthy, feeling positive, keeping safe, being part of the community and being independent. This helps deaf pupils to understand how their deafness impacts on their lives and learn strategies to advocate for themselves and improve difficult situations.

You can support deaf pupils to be fully involved in decision-making by:

- teaching the skills and language needed so they can take part in decision-making
- recording conversations and interactions – they're as valuable as formal feedback
- being specific: what do you want to find out about? What language are you going to use? Has the child understood the question? What are you going to do with the information? How are you going to feed back?

- considering using a deaf peer or friend to facilitate conversations around deaf-specific issues
- thinking about the best conditions for participation, for example, a quiet area with minimal background noise
- using a wide variety of strategies to collect feedback including online tools and visual resources such as pictures
- being aware of safeguarding procedures
- encouraging deaf pupils to take responsibility for their own deafness and to develop the confidence to ask for support.

If a deaf pupil experiences emotional or social difficulty that cannot be supported within school, they can be referred to other organisations for support, such as the National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Deaf CAMHS). The Teacher of the Deaf or local specialist educational service for deaf children should be able to advise on local services.

## Anti-bullying policy

Deaf pupils are more vulnerable to bullying than hearing pupils. Settings face several challenges in identifying, responding to and preventing pupils with SEN and/or disabilities being bullied and victimised.

Staff can help prevent and deal with bullying by:

- giving the pupil time to give a full account of what happened, recognising that communication can be particularly difficult when they are upset
- ensuring the pupil and their parents know the school's anti-bullying policy and understand related procedures
- ensuring the pupil understands the concept and different types of bullying – that all pupils tease and are teased, but unacceptable levels should be challenged and personal toleration levels should be respected
- identifying a staff member for the deaf pupil to discuss worries and concerns with
- regularly observing and monitoring the interaction between pupils and being alert to signs of bullying, such as a pupil:
  - › asking to stay inside at break time
  - › becoming anxious near lunch and home time
  - › not taking part in class activities
- providing opportunities or individual sessions for the pupil to decide and practice (for example, through role play) how to respond to bullying and how to problem-solve

- providing deaf awareness training for pupils and, when appropriate, involving the deaf pupil in choosing the content.

 Our resource *Protecting deaf children from bullying: For primary and secondary schools* has been produced for any education professional working to support deaf pupils in primary and secondary schools. It has guidance on how schools can adapt existing arrangements to prevent bullying and for handling bullying incidents in order to meet the needs of deaf pupils. You can order or download the resource at [www.ndcs.org.uk/protecting](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/protecting).

 Information for parents and young people are also available at [www.ndcs.org.uk/bullying](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/bullying).

## Behaviour

Settings should strike a balance between making reasonable allowances for a pupil's deafness and communication difficulties, while holding deaf pupils to the same behaviour standards as other pupils.

Challenging behaviour may be caused by:

- frustrations about not being able to hear or understand what is going on
- fatigue – deaf pupils can have a shorter attention span and tire more quickly as they have to concentrate hard to hear
- being teased or bullied about their deafness.

Schools can support positive behaviours by:

- making sure the child understands rules and routines
- explaining and talking through changes to the timetable and routines
- showing as well as explaining the rules and expectations, and the consequences of breaking them
- talking through difficult situations so the child understands what they have done wrong. Deaf pupils' understanding of emotions and other people's mental states may be less developed than their peers', so it is important that they understand the reason for discipline and not just that they got caught.

 For more information on deaf children's wellbeing, resources and links to organisations that can support emotional and mental health, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing).

## 9

## Quality improvement: Classroom observation and pupil feedback

### Learning walks

Settings must make sure there is provision for all pupils with SEN and that teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress of all pupils in their class. Learning walks and classroom observations allow managers to assess how well interventions and support strategies for pupils with additional needs are working.

This checklist will help managers assess the extent to which deaf pupils are engaged in teaching and learning during lesson observation.



#### Quality improvement checklist for setting managers<sup>6</sup>

The teacher	Observations and recommendations
Is the teacher aware of the pupil's level of deafness and implications for accessing learning?	
Has the teacher checked with the pupil that their hearing technology is being worn, is switched on and is working?	
Does the teacher know how to use a radio aid if the pupil needs one?	
Has the teacher taken steps to minimise background noise?	
Is the teacher's language matched to the pupil's needs? To what extent is the teacher repeating and reinforcing key points and checking understanding?	
Is the pupil seated in a position where they can hear and see the teacher for lip-reading but can also identify other speakers in the classroom and see the CSW to follow BSL delivery?	
Has the teacher used multisensory approaches (for example, visual clues) to help the pupil access learning?	

<sup>6</sup>This checklist is based on a pro forma designed by Helen Bate from Derbyshire local authority.

Has the teacher enabled the pupil to follow classroom discussion by identifying speakers and repeating contributions and questions from others?	
Is the teacher using clear speech patterns and standing or sitting in a position where the pupil can see them for lip-reading?	
Is the teacher using good whiteboard practice, such as listing lesson objectives and new vocabulary?	
<b>The support staff</b>	<b>Observations and recommendations</b>
<b>Are support staff demonstrating that they:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are working under the guidance of the teacher and are fully familiar with the lesson plan and learning objectives?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have sufficient knowledge of the subject being taught to be able to support the pupil with any pre-lesson preparation (introducing new concepts and vocabulary) or post-tutoring (to check full understanding)?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are aware of their role in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› implementing strategies and approaches to ensure access to teaching and learning?</li> <li>› helping the pupil achieve the learning objectives and targets (including any pre- or post-tutoring, communication support)?</li> <li>› (if they're used as notetakers) are taking sufficiently full and accurate lesson notes?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are providing the appropriate level of support to promote independent learning with a particular focus on helping the pupil develop understanding rather than just focusing on completing tasks?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can help ensure hearing technology is functioning properly and know what to do if there is a problem?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have the relevant qualification in BSL or ISL if the pupil needs sign support to access what is being said during the lesson?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are fully aware of the specific needs of deaf pupils (type, degree of deafness, residual hearing, level of language)?</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have discussed support needs with the teacher and pupil?</li> </ul>	
<b>The support staff</b>	<b>Observations and recommendations</b>
<b>Is the pupil:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to follow what the teacher is saying?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engaged and active in learning?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confident and able to identify their own needs and strategies to support access to learning?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making effective use of hearing technologies and knows what to do if there are problems?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to interact/communicate with adults and ask questions?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to interact/communicate with peers?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confident after the lesson that they have achieved the learning objectives?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engaged with the learning task?</li> </ul>	

## Standards for specialist hearing support services

The Sensory Service in Northern Ireland is not required to operate to specific standards. However, they voluntarily use the following quality standards and resources to review service development:

- NatSIP: Quality Standards for Sensory Support Services in England
- National Deaf Children's Society Quality Standards: Early years support for children with a hearing loss, aged 0 to 5 (England)
- Newborn hearing screening programme quality standards
- NatSIP Quality Improvement Support Pack. *The Quality Improvement Support pack* is available at: [www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/quality-improvement-for-services](http://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/quality-improvement-for-services)
- Education and Training (ETI) inspections ([www.etini.gov.uk/](http://www.etini.gov.uk/)).

All inspections by the Education and Training Inspectorate include an assessment of how SEN support is provided within the educational setting.

## Pupil feedback

Seeking pupils' views is an increasing part of a setting's quality assurance systems. The following approach was developed by the Sensory Impairment Service in Oxfordshire. The questionnaire can be used annually with children and young people (more frequently when there are concerns about social inclusion).

The questionnaire is intentionally simple so children and young people can access and answer the questions independently. The questions may stimulate more in-depth discussions to identify areas of difficulty and possible intervention strategies. The percentage score provides a statistical measure (if appropriate) to demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions and improved outcomes.



### Example: Pupil feedback form 1<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup>Reproduced with the kind permission of the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) from its publication *SEN Support and Outreach Services: Case studies to illustrate how different services are seeking to meet the quality standards* (2012).

## Recording and monitoring outcomes: Oxfordshire's questionnaire

## How's it going?

Point score	10	7	4	0
I enjoy school	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I feel safe at school	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I do well at school	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I am able to take part in activities that other children do	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I feel I have friends	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I enjoy breaks and lunchtimes	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I feel comfortable when there is pair or group work	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
I can talk to an adult if I am worried about something	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
My teachers understand what I need and do things to help	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
My support workers understand what I need and do things to help	Always	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
At school I enjoy...				
At school I don't enjoy...				
Other things that would help me are...				
<b>Total point score/ percentage:</b>				



Visit our webpage on creating good listening conditions for learning which includes a pupil feedback survey on listening conditions in the classroom, at [www.ndcs.org.uk/acoustics](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/acoustics).

# 10 Appendices

## Appendix 1: Types and levels of deafness

### Types of deafness

**Conductive deafness** is when sound cannot pass through the outer and middle ear to reach the cochlea and auditory nerve. This hearing loss can be temporary or permanent. The most common cause during childhood is a temporary build-up of fluid in the middle ear known as 'glue ear'.

Up to 80% of children will experience an episode of glue ear by the time they are aged 10. It is estimated that one in five of four-year-olds will be affected by glue ear at any one time. Teachers, particularly those teaching the youngest children, will have several pupils in their class who are experiencing difficulty in hearing.

For some children, glue ear can reduce hearing considerably for a protracted period and this has a significant impact on learning and progress.

**Sensorineural (or nerve) deafness** is when there is a problem in the inner ear (most often because the hair cells in the cochlea are not working properly) or with the auditory nerve. It reduces both your ability to hear quiet sounds and the quality of the sound that you do hear. Sensorineural deafness is permanent.

**Mixed hearing loss** is when there is a combination of sensorineural and conductive hearing loss, such as when a child has glue ear and a permanent sensorineural deafness.

**Congenital and acquired deafness** refers to children who are born deaf. Other children acquire deafness due to illness, accident or a late onset genetic condition.

### Levels of deafness

Deafness is measured in two ways:

- how **loud** the sound has to be so that the child can hear it. This is measured in decibels (dB)
- which frequencies (pitch) the child can or cannot hear, measured in hertz (Hz).

Each child's deafness is different depending on which frequencies are affected and how loud a sound has to be before they can hear.

Few children are totally deaf. Most children can hear some sounds at certain pitches and volumes, known as their 'residual hearing'. There are different degrees of deafness classified as follows.

### Mild hearing loss

Many young people with mild hearing loss do not use hearing technologies such as hearing aids, but a mild loss can still have a significant impact on education.

- Pupils may not hear if there is background noise or if they are far away from the speaker.
- Pupils would not be able to follow a whispered conversation.



To find out more about the impact of a mild hearing loss on children's ability to learn download our resource *Mild Hearing Loss: Information for Professionals* at: [www.ndcs.org.uk/mildhearingloss](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/mildhearingloss).

### Moderate hearing loss

Most pupils with a moderate hearing loss will use hearing aids. Without hearing aids, a pupil will not be able to hear a whole conversation unless they are in a quiet room with a good view of the speaker's face.

Even with their hearing aids, pupils will find it extremely difficult to follow a conversation in a large group, if there is background noise or if they are far away from the speaker.

### Severe hearing loss

Most pupils with a severe hearing loss will be using hearing aids or cochlear implants.

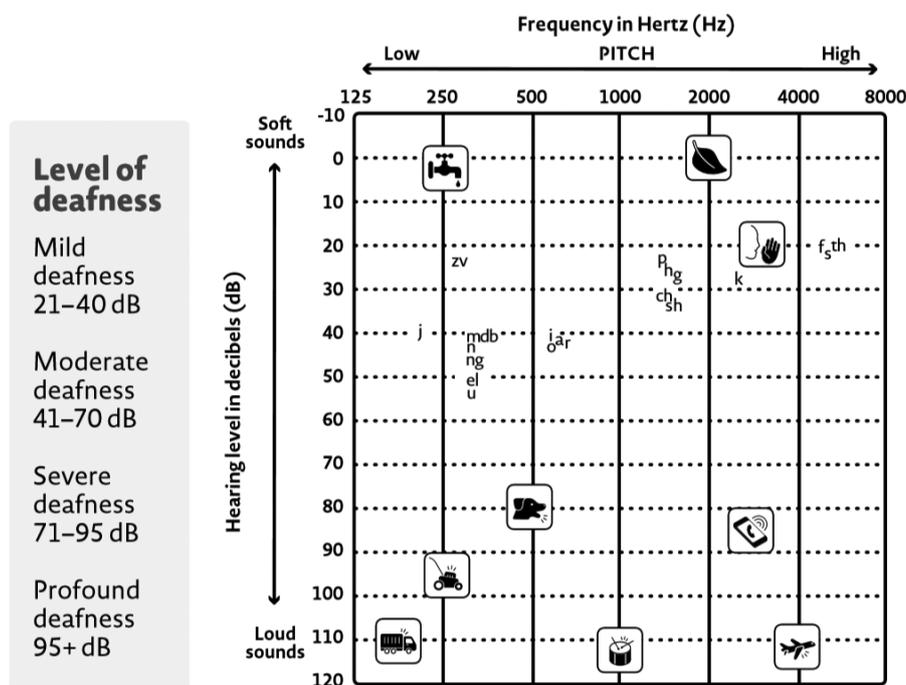
- A pupil will be unable to access conversation at normal levels without hearing aids or a cochlear implant but may be able to hear loud sounds such as a dog barking or a drum.
- With hearing aids or a cochlear implant most pupils will be able to follow a conversation within a quiet room provided that the speaker is within two to three metres of them.
- A pupil is likely to require additional communication support, for example, sign support or lip-reading, to understand speech in the presence of any background noise or within a group conversation.

## Profound hearing loss

Most profoundly deaf pupils will use a cochlear implant or hearing aids.

- Without a cochlear implant or hearing aids a pupil will not be able to hear speech or other sounds. They may be able to feel very loud sounds such as a lorry passing them in the street.
- Without a cochlear implant or hearing aids the pupil is likely to use a sign-based language to communicate directly with another person.
- With cochlear implants or hearing aids the pupil may require additional communication support (for example through sign language or cued speech) to access speech, especially within background noise or within a group conversation.
- Some pupils may have a malformation of the inner ear – an absence or malformation of the cochlear or auditory nerve. This will mean they will have no direct access to sound at all. In these situations, hearing aids or cochlear implants would offer no benefit. They will use sign language as their main means of communication.

## Visual representation of the loudness and pitch of a range of everyday sounds



This diagram is based on British Society of Audiology definitions of hearing loss.

The Teacher of the Deaf will be able to explain the individual deaf child's level of hearing by using an audiogram, similar to the one above. An audiogram is a chart used by an audiologist to record the results of the hearing assessment and is a visual representation of the child's hearing.

### **Unilateral deafness**

There may be little or no hearing in one ear, but ordinary levels of hearing in the other.

The pupil will be unable to localise sound and follow group conversations and will find it difficult to understand speech in the presence of background noise.

### **Auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder (ANSD)**

ANSD occurs when sounds are received normally by the cochlea but become disrupted as they travel to the brain. Pupils with ANSD are likely to have greater difficulty understanding speech, especially in the presence of background noise. They may have a similar experience to someone using a mobile phone when the reception is poor and the sounds they hear are distorted. Some pupils with auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder will use hearing aids or cochlear implants; others will not find them beneficial and therefore not use them.

### **Deaf culture**

Less than 10% of deaf young people have deaf parents. These families often use British Sign Language (BSL) or Irish Sign Language (ISL) as the first language of the home. Other families may also choose to use sign language as a first language with their family members.

These families, and indeed many other deaf young people and adults, consider deafness as a culture rather than a disability. Within their community they use sign language and describe themselves as 'Deaf' with a capital D. Sign Language is the language of the Deaf community.

## **Appendix 2: Personal hearing technology**

Below is an overview of the types of hearing technology you may come across, how they work and what limitations they have. It is important to note that hearing technologies do not replace normal hearing.

### **Hearing aids**

A hearing aid amplifies sound and is worn in or behind the ear. It has three basic parts: a microphone, amplifier and speaker. Modern digital hearing aids can be programmed very closely to match the wearer's hearing loss and often have multiple programmes for wearing in different listening environments.

Hearing aids are designed to maximise the hearing the wearer has (known as their residual hearing). If the pupil has no measurable hearing at all at certain frequencies, especially the higher frequencies such as 'ss' and 'th', then a hearing aid will not improve this.

Hearing aids are programmed to help the wearer hear speech, but they amplify all sounds, including background noise, so a deaf pupil wearing hearing aids may still find it hard to hear speech. This is especially challenging for them in group situations, in a noisy playground or open plan breakout space. They may also have problems hearing in a classroom, gym or dining hall with wooden floors, as sounds 'bounce' off hard surfaces making it harder to hear.



**For more information on hearing aids see our resource *Hearing Aids: Information for families* at [www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsguide](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsguide).**

### Cochlear implants

This is a surgically implanted hearing device for severely and profoundly deaf children when hearing aids are not powerful enough for them to hear the entire speech range. A cochlear implant works by stimulating the auditory nerves and bypassing the damaged nerve cells within the cochlea.



**More information on cochlear implants can be found in our resource, *Cochlear Implants: A guide for families*, or at [www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants).**

### Bone conduction hearing devices

A bone conduction hearing device is designed for people who have a functioning cochlea, but the middle or outer part of the ear prevents the information reaching the cochlea in the usual way. This allows sound waves to be transmitted directly to the cochlea in the inner ear. Young children wear the sound processor on a headband. Older children may have a bone conduction hearing implant which allows them to attach the sound processor directly to the skull.



**More information can be found at [www.ndcs.org.uk/boneconduction](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/boneconduction).**

## Radio aids

A radio aid carries the teacher's voice directly to the pupil's receiver attached to their hearing aid, bone conduction hearing device or cochlear implant. It reduces some of the problems presented by distance from the teacher and background noise. The microphone and transmitter are worn by the teacher and the receiver is worn by the pupil and attached to their hearing technology such as a hearing aid. Some radio aids can be used by pupils without personal hearing technology by wearing an earpiece receiver. This may be particularly useful for pupils with unilateral deafness, with the earpiece worn in their good ear. Schools should ask a Teacher of the Deaf or Educational Audiologist for tailored advice.

Most pupils will have their hearing technology programmed to allow them to hear from both the radio aid and their surroundings so that they can hear other pupils as well as the teacher. However, it is possible to programme their hearing technology to only hear the radio aid. Some radio aids have a microphone function which switches from an individual talker to a small group interaction mode, based on orientation of the device. This is particularly useful for group work. Otherwise, the microphone can be passed to pupils speaking in group work or class discussion. The radio aid transmitter can also be connected to equipment such as televisions or computers, via an audio lead, to assist clarity.



For further information see our resource *How Radio Aids Can Help* at [www.ndcs.org.uk/how-radio-aids-can-help](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/how-radio-aids-can-help) or visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/how-technology-works](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/how-technology-works).

## Soundfield systems

Soundfield systems rely on a radio or wireless microphone worn by the teacher and loudspeakers, which are placed around the room. They project the teacher's voice at a consistent level around the classroom. These systems can improve the listening conditions for all pupils in a classroom.

Portable systems are available that can be moved between learning spaces as required. Some systems can link with other classroom equipment such as smartboards.

A pupil may need to use a radio aid alongside the soundfield system and both can be set up to work side by side.

## Appendix 3: 'Assess, plan, do, review' overview

Effective provision for any deaf child will involve:

- a thorough assessment of the child's needs and strengths

- a plan setting out how the setting will meet those needs and overcome any barriers to the pupil making good progress
- carrying out the plan effectively
- regular reviews of the pupil's progress and the success of the plan to establish whether changes need to be made and what these are.

Deafness isn't a learning disability, and with the right support, there's no reason why a deaf child can't achieve as much as a hearing child. Having high expectations of deaf children and young people is vital.

How to follow this approach is set out below. This will support any planning to meet additional learning needs within the Special Educational Needs (SEN) framework, not replace it.

### Assessing what support is needed

A good assessment will enable the setting to identify potential barriers to progress and the support that is needed to overcome these. An accurate and thorough understanding of a child's needs and strengths underpins good planning and progress. A good assessment will include:

- the child, young person's, or their families' self-evaluation of any support requirements
- information on the child's or young person's levels of progress and attainment
- parents' views about appropriate provision
- the involvement of specialists such as a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD)
- the use of specialist assessments
- the need for access to technology and communication support
- consideration of support needed to meet any specific subject requirements.

Deafness will impact on a range of factors that contribute to a pupil's ability to learn including:

- listening skills
- attention and concentration
- language development
- literacy skills
- working memory
- auditory memory

- processing time
- incidental learning
- social skills
- self-esteem
- learning style.



**It's likely that assessments will focus on these areas. Further advice on specialist assessments can be found in Chapter 8 and in our resource *Assessing and Monitoring the Progress of Deaf Children and Young People* [www.ndcs.org.uk/assessments](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/assessments).**

### Planning the right support

You should develop plans with the child or young person, parents and Teacher of the Deaf. You should consider:

- long-term outcomes for the child or young person agreed by them and their family
- short-term targets needed to achieve those outcomes
- the provision and adjustments required to achieve those outcomes and targets, meet the student's needs and overcome any barriers to accessing teaching and learning
- arrangements for monitoring and reviewing.

The challenges presented by a hearing loss mean that for many deaf children and young people their plan is likely to include:

- targets related to the development of language, communication, literacy, confidence and social skills and the support and interventions needed to achieve the targets
- the use and maintenance of hearing technology
- communication support
- how teaching and learning will take place in a good listening environment
- access arrangements for assessments and exams
- access to support from specialist staff such as Teachers of the Deaf, teaching assistants and communication support workers
- pre- and post-lecture tutoring
- high quality teaching to make sure deaf pupils are able to learn

- strategies to ensure the deaf pupil is fully included in the school community
- details of who is responsible for the overall coordination of the plan, delivering key aspects of the provision and organising regular reviews.

### **Implement or do: Putting the provision in place**

A child or young person's plan should set out who is responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of any plan. This would usually be the SENCo, with support from the Teacher of the Deaf. They will have responsibility for the following.

- Making sure all staff involved in teaching and supporting the deaf child have information, advice, guidance and training on how to support a deaf pupil and make sure they can access teaching and learning.
- Ensuring the child or young person's progress is monitored.
- Getting feedback from the child or young person on what is going well and what isn't.
- Making sure support and provision is in place (for example, employing qualified communication support staff, using hearing technology and making adjustments to teaching spaces to improve the listening conditions).
- Ensuring teachers and teaching assistants implement interventions and strategies agreed as part of the support.

Your setting should also make sure that all necessary modifications and adaptations are in place so that the deaf pupil has equal access to assessments and exams. More information on access arrangements can be found in Chapter 7.

### **Keeping the support and its impact under review**

A setting should regularly review and evaluate how effective support is, and the impact it has on a pupil's progress. The setting will have systems and processes for this. Key areas related to the pupil's deafness include the following.

- Levels of progress in areas of language and communication.
- Levels of overall progress and whether any gaps with other pupils are widening or narrowing.
- Whether subject content is accessible. For example, checking if the pupil is able to understand the language and concepts used in lessons or establishing where and when the pupil may experience most difficulty in hearing what is said.
- The effectiveness of communication support. For example, is the communication support worker able to interpret accurately and fluently what the teacher is saying?

- The effectiveness of technology.
- Any changes to the pupil's level of hearing.
- The pupil's success in communicating with others, socialising and forming friendships.

Where the pupil isn't making expected progress, specialist assessments, particularly in language and communication, may be helpful in identifying the source of difficulties and revising the plan and support strategies. Don't assume that the problem lies with the pupil. A Teacher of the Deaf can give advice on this.

Settings should also review the general effectiveness of provision for deaf pupils. This may include looking at, for example, the listening environments in the setting and whether staff need additional training and support. In Chapter 9 we give some guidelines for how setting leaders can do this.

## Appendix 4: Communication options

The information below covers the variety of communication options for deaf children. It is important to respect the deaf pupil's preferred means of communication.

### Spoken language

Nearly all (more than 90%) of deaf children are from families with no first-hand experience of deafness. This means that most deaf children are brought up with a spoken language as their first language.

Not all deaf children who use spoken language will have English as their home or first language. The Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) reported that in 2021, 5% of deaf children in Northern Ireland are English as an additional language (EAL) learners.

It is important to remember that whichever language is used in the home, the child could still experience a significant language delay. In many cases, spoken language will be supported by signing and lip-reading.

### British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL)

BSL and ISL are visual languages that use hand shapes, facial expression, gestures, body language and fingerspelling. Sign Language has a structure and grammar different from that of written and spoken English. Some deaf children will have BSL or ISL as their first language or preferred language but may also speak English as a second language. Deaf children brought up by deaf parents, who have BSL or ISL as a first language, will often start school with age or near age-appropriate language in BSL or ISL.

## Sign Supported English (SSE)

Some deaf children's spoken English may be supported with signs taken from BSL or ISL. When signs are used to support spoken English in this way it is known as Sign Supported English. It can be a way of making spoken English more visual and is used to add clarity to what is being said, for example in situations where deaf children may struggle with background noise or if they are too distant from the speaker.

## Lip-reading

Lip-reading has an important role in helping children access spoken language. Not every speech sound or word can be seen on the lips, but lip patterns of spoken words can help the deaf child identify what is being said, supporting the interpretation of the speech sounds that they hear. Lip-reading is a learned skill and evidence suggests that this skill is influenced by cognitive ability, good language and vocabulary knowledge, good reading skills, normal eyesight and good verbal short-term memory. On its own, lip-reading has a number of limitations but it's a natural support to understanding spoken communication and can be especially helpful to the deaf child.

## Cued speech

Cued speech is a lip-reading tool that enables access to spoken language visually. It uses eight hand shapes in four different positions and accompanies natural speech. Whereas some sounds cannot be fully lip-read (for example, 'p', 'm' and 'b' all look the same on the lips and sounds like 'k' and 'g' cannot be seen at all), the cues make it clear exactly what sound is used so that the deaf child may see the sound in each word as it is spoken in real time. This enables the child to develop a mental model of the spoken language regardless of whether they have any hearing or not.

# 11 Our information and support

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all the people and organisations who have contributed to the creation of this resource.

This resource has been developed by the National Deaf Children's Society, based on previous resources produced in collaboration with the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP). *Deaf-friendly education: Northern Ireland* has been produced with funding from A Fair Start, a Department of Education (DE) Northern Ireland programme.



For more information about A Fair Start, visit [www.education-ni.gov.uk/fair-start](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/fair-start).

## About the National Deaf Children's Society

We're here for every deaf child who need us – no matter what their level or type of deafness or how they communicate. We want to work with professionals like you to overcome the barriers that hold deaf children back.

Visit our website [www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk) to join us for free. You'll have access to:

- information resources for professionals
- our quarterly digital magazine and email updates
- workshops and events
- our Freephone Helpline.



**We are the National Deaf Children's Society,  
the leading charity for deaf children.**

**Freephone Helpline:**

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Developed with funding from the Fair Start programme.  
Fair Start is run by the Department of Education (DE)  
in Northern Ireland.

Published by the National Deaf Children's Society  
© National Deaf Children's Society March 2022

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This publication can be requested in large print or as a text file.  
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The National Deaf Children's Society is a registered charity in England  
and Wales no.1016532 and in Scotland no. SC040779. C0191



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