

Outstanding Care,
Compassionate People,
Healthier Communities

NHS

Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Audiology Services

Paediatric Rehabilitation Management Plan



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Introduction

When a child is found to have a hearing impairment and would benefit from amplification, it can be stressful and confusing for both parents and children. There may be different concerns depending on the age of the child and your feelings about the diagnosis, as different people will often react in different ways. The child's own feelings and personality will also influence what issues and concerns you may face.

In this booklet we aim to address some of the common concerns and bring to light any possible issues that you may not be aware of, to help to provide support for you and your child. **We are here to assist you through all stages of this process and ensure that your child isn't held back by their hearing loss.**

How we can provide the best support you child with hearing loss



Providing the most effective support for your child will involve a multi-disciplinary approach; this may include members from the following teams:

- Paediatric audiologists
- Teachers of the Deaf
- Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) consultants
- Paediatricians
- Social Care
- School SENCO.

All of these professionals will have a role to play in providing the best care for your child, but evidence shows that the people who have the biggest impact on a hearing impaired child's success with communication and educational development are the parents / carers. That is why it is important to understand not only our role as professionals, and what care we will provide, but also what you can do to help your child to succeed.

Our commitments

The Paediatric Audiology Team will offer regular assessments of your child's hearing, to ensure that the hearing aids are correctly set up to give your child the clearest sound possible. We will also:

- Be available to provide any urgent appointments if there are concerns about your child's hearing or the performance of the hearing aids.
- Fit them with the most up to date technology, ensuring that they benefit from all technological advances.
- Service and maintain the hearing aids and replace ear moulds when required.
- Replace lost or damaged hearing aids without a charge, however, these devices are expensive so we ask that you look after them as best you can.
- Provide any information you may need and give emotional support to help you and your child deal with any challenges you may face.
- We will set goals with you and your child, to address any problems that may arise with their hearing and development and help them to achieve their potential.

How can care givers best support their child?

Early support

Often, when a hearing loss is identified, the child will only be a few weeks of age. This has significant benefits, but can be a source of confusion for parents/carers. The hearing assessment process at this age is quite complex and involves recording responses from the brain stem, using different sounds while they are asleep. This method gives a very accurate picture of their hearing and we are happy to fully explain the results to you if there is anything you are unsure of.

Put the hearing aids in as much as possible

As young infants usually don't show consistent reactions to sound and don't initially understand language, it can be difficult to see what benefit they get from hearing aids at such a young age. However, the most important time to have consistent access to clear speech is during the first year of life. During this time children's brains develop at a very fast rate, enabling them to recognise language.

How can care givers best support their child?

If they don't have consistent access to all speech sounds then they will struggle to understand speech as they grow up and will always have difficulties. This is because connections in the brain become fixed and so it becomes harder to recognise new speech sounds that they haven't had access to.

You may feel that your child is reacting to sounds without the hearing aids, which we would expect unless there is a severe to profound degree of hearing loss. Children with less severe degrees of hearing loss will be aware of sounds but won't be able to hear speech clearly, so will react to environmental sound or voices, but aren't always able to hear all of the different parts of words due to the limited sounds they can hear.

You should aim for the hearing aids to be worn for all waking hours. We would typically expect usage of around 4 hours a day for young infants rising to around 8 hours a day by 6 months of age. It may be beneficial for us to request support from Teachers of the Deaf or the Social Care team, if there are problems achieving consistent usage.

What to do if your child keeps pulling their hearing aids out?

Take control of when the aids are in or out

Most children will wear their hearing aids happily most of the time, but sometimes it can be difficult to keep the hearing aids in the child's ears, as they will often take them out (just like they take off socks, hats and glasses). We can advise of different methods to try and help with this.

If your child keeps taking their aids out, try using distractions until they forget about them. Try putting the aids in when you spend time with them and take them out when they are playing alone. This will help you to take control of when the aids are in your child's ears. Your child will learn that when the aids are in, you will stop them taking them out if

they try and then your child will give up. If they take the aids out, this isn't a sign that they don't like them or that they are too loud; children are naturally curious and will want to investigate them. This can be particularly challenging for ages 12-24 months, but don't give up, just keep trying as it does get easier.

As children get older there can be a variety of reasons why they don't want to wear hearing aids. If an older child is fitted with hearing aids, they may initially find them loud as they are used to hearing things at a much quieter volume.

The greater the degree of hearing loss, the bigger the change and so it will be harder for them to adjust.

The only way for them to get used to the hearing aids is through regular use.

Most young children wear their hearing aids happily, but unfortunately some older children, mostly teenagers, can become more reluctant to wear the aids as they may feel it makes them different. Presenting a positive image regarding their deafness and hearing aid use in younger childhood will help them to

feel more confident about wearing hearing aids and feel that it is not something they need to hide or should feel embarrassed about.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) offer a mentoring service and have a website dedicated to hearing impaired young people called 'the buzz', which could help your child to deal with any negative feelings they have towards their hearing loss or hearing aids.

Why it is important to attend appointments

Your child may have appointments in several different departments, but everyone has a different role to play in caring for your child. It is important that the child is brought to all of these. You may have appointments with ENT and paediatricians for medical assessments and investigations into what has caused the hearing impairment and also whether there are any other problems that could be linked.

The Teachers of the Deaf provide educational support by visiting at home, school or nursery.

You will have appointments with us in audiology as we need to monitor your child's hearing to ensure that the hearing aids are programmed correctly and are functioning properly.



What support is available?

Parenting a child with a hearing impairment can be challenging, but you are not alone; there are lots of people who are here to give support:

- **The paediatric audiologist**

If you are having any issues (practically or emotionally) with your child's hearing loss, please talk to us. We have helped hundreds of hearing impaired children and their families and can help you to overcome any obstacles and deal with any negative emotions that you may have about your child's hearing.

- **Support groups**

The NDCS has support groups in different areas of the country.

Email: nottsdcs@hotmail.co.uk

- **Lincoln Deaf Children's Society**

On Facebook.

- **Chesterfield Deaf Children's Group** On Facebook.

- **Mansfield Deaf Society**

Telephone: 01623 625769

Email: mansfieldnorthnottsdeafsoc@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.mansfieldnorthnottsdeafsoc.co.uk

- **Teachers of the Deaf**

We work together with the Teachers of the Deaf to provide practical help and educational support to give you the

tools to help your child's development, by visiting your child at home, nursery or school.

- **Social Care**

Parenting is never easy and the Social Care network is made up of lots of different agencies to provide support. We may discuss involving social care if we feel that you would benefit from support to attend appointments or cope with the challenges of providing the best care for your hearing impaired child.

- **Speech development**

A commonly occurring source of anxiety for parents of young infants identified with hearing loss is whether they will develop speech or whether they have to learn sign language. There are varying degrees of hearing loss and the need for sign language is very rare. Even children with a profound level of hearing impairment will usually be able to communicate using speech, either through hearing aid use or cochlear implants. Extra support is available should there be any delays in speech development. If there are any barriers to communication development these will be discussed at your appointments. The audiologists will monitor your child's development to ensure they are hitting the expected milestones.

First days at school

The first day at school wearing hearing aids is often a source of anxiety for children and parents, whether the child has worn hearing aids from infancy or if the need for amplification was identified at an older age. Children are naturally inquisitive and are likely to ask questions about what the hearing aids are and why they need to wear them. This is perfectly normal but it may be helpful to discuss this with your child and tell them not to be shy about their hearing aids and ensure they understand why they need

them. Most schools will have other students who wear hearing aids, but there may not be any in their class. Young children don't have any preconceptions about hearing aids, and so any attention tends to be positive and good natured.

The experience in school for the vast majority of hearing impaired children is positive and they have no issues, however, if your child does have any issues at school it should be raised with their teachers as this is not acceptable.



Hearing aids

Which type of hearing aid will be best for my child?

There are several different types, manufacturers and models of hearing aids. You may notice these more once the need for amplification has been discussed.

Different hospitals often use different models, which is mainly down to the preference of clinicians.

There are different styles, with some going in the ear and some behind, some use an ear mould and some

use a thin tube and a tip, which can be of different sizes and strengths. Some children with a severe to profound level of deafness will have cochlear implants fitted. The most appropriate hearing aids and the pros and cons of each will be discussed and the option to try any new technological advances will also be discussed, when they become available.

Will my child always need to wear hearing aids?

This will depend upon the cause of the hearing loss. Hearing losses that affect the inner ear (known as a sensori-neural hearing loss) are usually permanent and so would always need the use of amplification.

Impairments that affect the middle or outer part of the ear (known as a conductive hearing loss) can often be temporary or be improved with surgery. The most common form of conductive hearing loss is glue ear; this is where fluid builds up behind the ear drum. It is usually temporary and will drain spontaneously.

However, how long this will take can be unpredictable.

Some conductive problems can be permanent, for example if the middle ear bones are malformed at birth or if a hearing loss is present following surgery on the ear.

The audiologist will advise on the nature of your child's hearing loss and whether this is likely to improve or be more permanent. If an improvement in hearing is found and a hearing aid is no longer required, then we will request that it is returned to ensure it isn't used inappropriately risking damage to your child's hearing.

We will set goals for your child's hearing and development to address any problems and help them to achieve their potential.



WARNING

Batteries can be toxic or present a choking risk to young children. The audiologist will ensure a battery lock is fitted to your child's hearing aid if they are under 5 years of age or if you have young children in the household. Please ensure spare and used batteries are stored safely and out of the reach of young children.

Advice for communicating with hearing impaired children:

1. Face your child and make eye contact when you are playing and/or talking together. Help them to make it a habit to watch the speaker.
2. Don't cover your mouth when talking.
3. Speak naturally and don't exaggerate facial expressions.
4. Do not talk while eating or chewing.
5. Always position yourself with good light on your face. Speak clearly and slowly at a distance of around 1 metre.
6. Lip movements, gestures and facial expressions all give clues. If your child can see you clearly then they have the best chance of hearing and understanding you.
7. Always try to reduce background noise (turn down/off TV, etc.).
8. Try re-phrasing sentences. Don't raise your voice as this introduces distortion.
9. Teach your child not to interrupt the speaker. They may not hear information at the beginning but may catch the end of the sentence.
10. Encourage your child to summarise what they have heard.
11. For older children, captioning can help when watching TV.
12. Encourage your child to keep his/her sense of humour.
13. Lastly, remember your child may tire easily. Listening is hard work.

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Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692
Email: **sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net**

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

If you would like this letter or information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

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To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202601-07-PRMP
Created: March 2017 / Revised: January 2026
Review Date: January 2028