

Reasonable Adjustments For Deaf Children in Early Years Settings

Education providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that deaf children are not at a substantial disadvantage when compared with their peers (Equality Act 2010). Settings should not wait until a child falls behind before additional support is provided. There is a huge amount of evidence to show that deaf children under-achieve unless settings are proactive in providing a fully inclusive environment.

The table below suggests the *most common* reasonable adjustments which settings can make. It can also be used to audit whether reasonable adjustments are being made. Making reasonable adjustments will increase independence and reduce dependence. Managers and senior staff must give consideration to whole setting policy and planning, training and time allocation etc. so staff are confident and able make all the relevant reasonable adjustments that are required.

	Families and settings should:	because ...	Achieved yes/no	Action Required
1	Play, talk and have fun!	All babies and children need someone to talk to and something to talk about. Play, be creative and have fun!		
2	Set up a good routine of putting the hearing aids in. To begin with this might be when they are distracted and busy. Keep at it and increase the time. We need babies and children to wear their hearing aids all the time so they do not miss anything.	We expect babies and children to wear socks when it is cold and hats when it is hot. We expect them to wear their aids. Keep putting the aids back in if they take them out. It may be a struggle at first but they will keep them in if you keep at it! At clinic we can see how much the hearing aids have been worn for. This is a fabulous way to celebrate any increase in the time they are worn. Once your child is wearing the aids, don't mention them! You don't congratulate them for wearing clothes, it is expected. For advice on how to encourage hearing aid use please refer to the NDCS information: https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/childhood-deafness/hearing-aids/getting-your-child-to-wear-their-hearing-aids-and-cochlear-implants/		
3	Check that hearing aids are working regularly throughout the day Usually: A steady flash = working A quick flash=battery is going flat and needs changing No flash=turn on or change the battery	Without working, worn, hearing aids, babies and children with a hearing loss will not be able to hear. If they can't hear, they will not learn what things are and this may stop them from understanding and talking like other children. Wearing a hearing aid which is not working will bung up the ear and stop them using any natural hearing that they do have. Take spare batteries with you and put the tool to open the hearing aids on your keyring. Check the earmoulds clean and free from wax. Sounds will not be able to pass through the earmoulds if they are bunged up with wax even if the lights are flashing. Please ask for advice or training if unsure.		
4	Make sure earmoulds and hearing aids are put in the ears properly, so they are comfortable.	If hearing aids are not comfortable or are annoying, the child is more likely to take them out. If hearing aids keep falling off the ears, we can provide 'stick and stay tape' to safely secure them behind the ears. This is available from audiology. Please ask.		

5	Keep checking that the hearing aids are still in their ears	Babies and children can be very quick at taking hearing aids out! Keep checking where they are. Try using a hearing aid clip to secure them to clothing so they don't get lost. If they are taken out, leave it a few minutes and then put them back in while the child is distracted.		
6	Make sure your child is always facing you when you talk and play with them.	Get the child's attention before speaking so they are looking at you. Also make sure you are looking at them. When you face someone your speech is louder and your expression can be seen.		
7	Make sure your child is near you or the person talking to them.	Hearing aids work best up to 2m. If they are further away, they may not hear you. Babies and children with a hearing loss need to know someone is talking so they know to actively look and listen. If they do not know someone is talking they will not know to look and listen. They may get upset if they can't see or hear you if you walk out of the room.		
8	Have a good listening environment as hearing aids make all sounds louder. Ask for advice on how to improve the listening environment.	This would include closing the door to the kitchen if the washer/drier is on, closing windows to outside noise, turning off the TV or music which is not being listened to and keeping animals quiet. It is also important not to be distracted by mobile phones and other devices.		
9	Set time aside specifically for talking and listening.	It is difficult for babies and children with a hearing loss to overhear other people talking like hearing children do. They often need to hear new words lots of times before they understand and remember them. Setting time aside to actively play where it is quiet with no other distractions is really important.		
10	Use visual prompts eg, signs, gestures, real objects, pictures to support new routines.	Show the child a nappy if you want to change their bum. Tell them what you are going to do. This will help your child to understand the routine of what is coming – and support language development.		
11	Use visual prompts eg, signs, gestures, real objects, pictures to support new language.	Many words sound very similar and can cause great confusion eg. pat/mat/bat/hat/cat/sat. Visual prompts can also help to develop understanding, vocabulary and concepts.		
12	Give time for a baby or child with a hearing loss to look at an object or person and then at the person talking.	It is often difficult for a baby or child with a hearing loss to look at an object and listen at the same time. They also need extra time to look at and try to make sense of what they can see or hear. Be patient and give more time.		
13	Sit opposite or at right angles to your child so they can clearly see your face	Sitting next to a baby or child with a hearing loss makes it very difficult for them to look down at a book, toy or object and then up at your face. Sitting opposite or at right angles is much better.		
14	Talk to your child about the sounds you can hear. Draw their attention to new	This helps to develop their listening skills, memory and helps them to understand their world. ETHV have additional information on developing listening skills for deaf children. Please ask.		

	sounds, telling them what the sound is.			
15	Share books. Name the objects, talk about what people and animals are doing, where they are going and how they might feel. As children get older, talk about shapes, colours, numbers and textures. Be guided by your child. Leave gaps for them to comment.	<p>Sharing books is a lovely activity with children of all ages. To begin with, they will chew the pages and turn them randomly. They will then start to take notice of the pictures and begin to comment on them. Children often like to have the same books over and over again – and complain if you miss bits out!</p> <p>For more information on supporting listening and speech, please refer to the NDCS factsheet: https://www.ndcs.org.uk/documents-and-resources/supporting-your-deaf-baby-or-toddler-s-listening-and-speech-development/</p> <p>ETHV have additional information on reading with deaf children. Please ask.</p>		
16	Limit the use of electronic and noisy toys	Babies and children with a hearing loss will enjoy playing with these toys but are very unlikely to be able to hear and understand the noises and voices on them. They also drown out spoken words of people around them. Children with a hearing loss need to be able to hear and see real people talking and playing with them.		
17	Play games to develop listening skills Please ask for specific advice on activities.	<p>Children have to learn how to listen before they can go on to understand what people say. Using signs, pictures and real objects can help. It is really important for children to learn to listen and understand. Speech will hopefully come once listening and understanding has developed.</p> <p>ETHV have additional information on developing listening skills for deaf children. Please ask.</p>		
18	Allow children to have ‘time out’ where they are not expected to listen and concentrate.	Children with a hearing loss get very tired from having to actively look, listen and concentrate all the time. Every communication contact takes a lot of effort. They get fatigued much quicker than other children.		
19	Deaf Awareness Training for staff in settings; teaching, non-teaching and supervising.	<p>Children with a hearing loss are as cognitively able as other children. Greater understanding of hearing loss, knowledge and use of specialist equipment along with specific strategies will allow children with a hearing loss to achieve like their peers.</p> <p>Contact: Educational Team for Hearing and Vision on (01472) 323465 to arrange as soon as possible.</p> <p>Flexible training sessions can be arranged free of charge.</p>		

Please contact us for further advice, information and training. We will be very happy to hear from you!

Updated by KJ, RB, SS, CP and KA May 2020