**Wirral Sensory Service**

**Early Years Policy – Hearing Support**

**Introduction**

The team aim to work with 0–5-year-old children, in collaboration with their parents and other relevant professionals, in the home setting and/or in the early years setting.

Early diagnosis of deafness and therefore early fitting of appropriate amplification provides the child with the best opportunity to access sound and to develop language. As such, early intervention is vital to provide children who are deaf with the best chance of achieving age-appropriate communication milestones.

Parents/ carers will also be supported with the diagnosis of deafness, which can be overwhelming for some families. They will also be provided with advice on hearing devices and audiological management, where appropriate. Information and advice will also be shared on communication options, emotional development and supporting a positive image of deafness, assessment of communication skills and access to support networks. Information can also be shared with other professionals regarding the needs of the child.

All the children on the caseload from 0-5 years old are the responsibility of a QToD (qualified teacher for children who are deaf). The teacher has the overview and is responsible for the co-ordination of support, report writing, devising programmes and attending meetings; however, the direct support and implementation of the programmes, within the home and/or early years setting may also be carried out by specialist teaching assistant within the team.

**Initial visit**

The child will be referred to the team, via the referral procedure applicable to all children. A QToD will contact family after contact from Paediatric Audiology and within 24 hours of diagnosis (for Newborn Hearing Screen referral) or within 5 working days. The QToD may attend the Information session arranged by Paediatric Audiology and will ensure permission for involvement obtained.

The QToD will offer a home visit to discuss concerns which may include hearing aid use, language development, available benefits, local support. At this visit information will be given, including relevant National Deaf Children’s Society publications,and local deaf children’s group about the Sensory Service and how the team work with children in the early years.

**Highly Specialist SLT**

For children with a severe to profound hearing loss, a Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist working with deaf children will be involved. The QToD and SLT will work closely together and usually co-ordinate home visits.

**Assessment**

Success from the start: A developmental resource for families of deaf children aged 0 to 3 is shared with families and used. Reviews of this resource are a particularly effective way of generating an exchange of information and ideas during joint ToD/SLT home visits and informing next steps which are outlined on a Summary Sheet. The resource can be found on the NDCS website: <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/documents-and-resources/success-from-the-start-a-developmental-resource-for-families-of-deaf-children-aged-0-to-3/>

**Support**

The level of support provided by the team is determined by the nationally recognised NatSIP Eligibility Framework for Scoring Support Levels criteria and the professional judgement of the Teacher of the Deaf. The NATSIP criteria is fluid dependent upon a number of factors such as transition and change of condition. Support may include monitoring and assessment, provision of information, attending meetings and clinic appointments, offering advice to professionals and parents, advice towards programs of work, delivery of specialist programs and modelling good practice, written reports, training of professionals as requested by the setting.

For children requiring direct work primarily to support language development, the QToD will devise an appropriate program of support (Specialist Support Programme) for the child, following discussions with parents/ carers, the setting (as appropriate) and with the Highly Specialist Speech and language Therapist (if they are involved). Language development will be monitored using ‘Success from the start: A developmental resource for families of deaf children aged 0 to 3’. There will be regular meetings to review the Specialist Support Programme and progress made.

**Transition**

The QToD will liaise with the setting with regarding the child’s hearing needs and support transition to nursery (if applicable) and to school (foundation stage). Training will be given to staff with regards to the child’s hearing needs, audiological management and strategies for support. This may be whole school INSET or to the individual staff working with the child.

Following transition, the team will continue to support the child according to their visual needs and the amount of support given will be determined by the NATSiP criteria.

**Terms**

Please note, like the NDCS, 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.