**Wirral Sensory Service**

**Communication Policy – Hearing Support**

*‘The right approach to communication will be the ones that work best for you, your family and your child’* (Early Support Programme: ‘Information for Parents- ‘Deafness’ p.66)

*‘To start, your choice will be guided by what you think is best for your child. As your baby grows and starts to reach their first milestones, you will be able to monitor their progress and, together with professionals, you can consider whether a different approach is needed.*’ (NDCS, 2022)

*As they develop, children and young people who are deaf may use a number of different methods of communication or vary their communication mode, depending on the environment they are in. Detailed descriptions of communication modes can on the NDCS website* (NDCS, 2022)

The role of the Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children (TOD), together with the Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist, (SLT) is to ensure that parents and carers have ready access to unbiased information. Given that sometimes parents ‘don’t know what they don’t know’, they are supported to reach decisions that are sensitive to individual circumstances, and which reflect their own culture, values and views and meet the needs of their child.

**Informed Choice**

*‘Informed choice is not seen as a one-off decision, but as an ongoing process which should be capable of responding to changing circumstances’* (Early Support Programme: Informed Choice, Families and Deaf Children)

Opportunities to explore and discuss these communication options start after diagnosis and continue throughout each child’s school year can occur during:

* Individual contacts from the TOD and/or SLT
* Meetings e.g. Specialist Support Programme, EHCP Annual Reviews, Sensory Plans
* ‘Supporting Young Deaf Children’ course for setting staff
* Family workshops/ courses e.g. the adapted ‘Hanen’ course for parents: ‘Meeting in the Middle’ (preschool)
* Family activity events
* Wirral Deaf Children’s Society events
* Paediatric Audiology appointments
* Contact with deaf Sign Language tutor/ referral to ‘I can’ project

The Early Years Teachers of the Deaf and Specialist Speech and Language Therapist may signpost to the other publications including from the NDCS.

**Meeting the communication needs of individual deaf children**

The following strategies are used:

* Ongoing discussion about effective strategies for developing communication
* Provision of resources, including books, signposting to websites, information sheets
* Individual work and sessions with the TOD, SLT or Specialist Teaching Assistant
* ‘Supporting Young Deaf Children’ course for setting staff
* Family workshops including signing and early communication
* Support from a Specialist Teaching Assistant, during home visits, or in settings
* Signing sessions for deaf children from Deaf BSL tutor
* Home-based signing tuition from Deaf Instructors for families or ‘I can’ project
* Advice to setting staff regarding effective practices for fostering communication
* Plan and review communication during meetings with parents, Teacher of the Deaf,
* Speech and Language Therapist and other relevant professionals
* Ongoing informal discussion about progress with communication with families
* Joint visits from ToDs and SLT, looking at ‘Success from the Start’ with carers
* Close liaison between TOD, SLT, and other relevant professionals, including Manchester Auditory Implant Team, Social Care, Health Visitors, Paediatric Audiologists, Family Support workers, Setting Staff, Paediatricians, Physiotherapists etc
* Plan and review of Sensory Plans and Specialist Programmes

Deaf children, young people and their families are all different. Their preferred method of communication may depend on a wide range of factors including the level and type of deafness, background and education and parents should be able to make an informed choice.