



# One minute guide

## Safeguarding deaf children and young people (those with hearing loss)

### When communicating with deaf children:

- this is best done in a quiet area and reduce any background noise.
- check understanding and be aware that they will be looking at your face.
- expressions for visual cues to support their understanding; it is best when one person is speaking at a time; and to aid lip reading, avoid face obstructions i.e. masks / hands over the mouth,
- face the child, speak clearly and avoid bright lights or windows behind the speaker which cast a shadow over them and the child cannot see their faces clearly.

### What can practitioners do to support families?

Families of deaf children need to be proactive in helping their child develop language, and thrive however most families of deaf children have no prior experience of deafness. Parents may experience grief and anger, and may question their parenting skills. It is vital that deaf children can express their social and emotional wellbeing.

Practitioners should support and challenge parents/carers to:

- Form a strong bond with their deaf child from the earliest age;
- Develop skills to communicate effectively with their child, whether through spoken language, sign or both;
- Create an environment where communication helps their child develop language, social skills, cognitive abilities and to stay safe.
- Engage with health and education professionals with expertise to assess needs and help parents to address these.

Key practitioners should be involved in developing an early help plan, which will coordinate activities and improve outcomes for the child. If an early help plan does not achieve the desired outcomes for the child due to the high levels of support needed, or if there is a concern that the child is at risk of significant harm, then contact should be made to duty and advice team. When making the contact, it is important to emphasise that the child has a hearing loss, and to give details of practitioners who can give specialist advice.

### What should practitioners consider when working with deaf children?

When working with a deaf child or young person it is important to:

- Seek advice from specialists, particularly the child's Teacher of the Deaf, and if appropriate, the speech and language therapist or other practitioners.
- Check that the child is attending appropriate appointments e.g. audiology, as these are vital in their well being and development;
- Consider how the child is developing language and communication skills, and how well the family and others are providing the necessary support and framework for this.
- Ensure that the child can communicate effectively with you, using sign language with professional interpretation where it is the child's preferred or strongest method;
- Ensure that equipment needs are met and that they are being used and functioning well;
- Check that the child has opportunities to socialise; and has access to other deaf children if they want this.
- Check that pre-school children have access to early learning opportunities and settings, and older children have access to activities out of school time.

### Why is it important to safeguard deaf children?

It is important to safeguard all children and young people from harm. However, those with hearing loss are particularly vulnerable. For the purposes of this guide, the term deaf is used to apply to all those with hearing loss which might affect communication, interaction and development. Deafness is of varying degrees: mild; moderate; severe; and profound.

Deafness can significantly impede a child's ability to develop language and to communicate effectively. This can present a barrier to their social, emotional and intellectual development and impact on their ability to express their emotions, needs and concerns.

This can make them particularly vulnerable to:

- Social isolation and a lack of social opportunities;
- Neglect, particularly where appropriate communication and language are not fostered and stimulated.
- Abuse and bullying within the home and outside.
- Social and emotional difficulties, poor self-esteem and mental health needs.
- Low levels of literacy and educational achievement.

### What help is available to deaf children in Havering

There is a range of help available to deaf children and young people in Havering:

#### 10 Hearing Helpers

Whether you've just been diagnosed or you've been living with hearing loss for some time, these organisations, individuals and services can help make life easier for you.

#### 1. Hearing therapists

Hearing therapists are trained to help people adapt to living with their hearing loss or tinnitus. They work out a personalised rehabilitation programme, which can include lessons on using a hearing aid, how to communicate better and keeping up your work and social life..

#### 2. Community support volunteers

Hearing Link is a national charity that helps and supports people who have lost most or all of their hearing. They have a team of community support volunteers around the UK who give support and practical advice to people who have lost their hearing. Community support volunteers are usually people who have hearing loss themselves.

To find out more or to get in touch with a community support volunteer in your area, contact [Hearing Link](#).

#### 3. Lipreading classes

Going to lipreading classes in your local area is a great way to develop your lipreading skills, meet new people and find out more about what's going on in your area for people with hearing loss. Some employers may agree to give you time off work to attend these classes.

To find a local class, contact the [Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults \(ATLA\)](#), or your local adult education centre or college. If there is no class in your area, contact [Action on Hearing Loss](#), which campaigns for better access to lipreading classes.

#### 4. Hearing dogs

Hearing dogs help severely and completely deaf people by responding to specific sounds that hearing people often take for granted, such as the alarm clock, doorbell, a baby crying, the telephone and smoke alarms. The dogs are trained and provided by the charity, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. Find out more about [hearing dogs](#).

#### 5. Financial benefits

You may be able to claim some benefits because of your hearing loss. Contact [Action on Hearing Loss Information Line](#) for more advice (telephone 0808 808 0123; textphone 0808 808 9000), email [informationline@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:informationline@hearingloss.org.uk) or read its [information on benefits and services](#).

#### 6. Sign language classes

British Sign Language (BSL) is a language used by deaf people and their families. BSL uses a combination of hand expressions and lip shapes to create words and phrases. Tone is added through context, facial expression and body language, so a single signed phrase can infer a number of different meanings.

Contact [Action on Hearing Loss's Information Line](#) to find out about [BSL courses in your area](#).

#### 7. Hearing loss equipment

Action on Hearing Loss has a [downloadable catalogue of equipment](#) to help people with hearing loss or tinnitus. Items range from extra-loud mobile phones to flashing doorbells. Alternatively you can [browse their online shop](#).

#### 8. Family and friends

Make sure your family and friends know about your hearing loss. Action on Hearing Loss has [communication tips for hearing people](#) on how to talk clearly to you and not to leave you out of the conversation.

#### 9. Counselling

According to the charity SignHealth, about 40% of profoundly deaf people experience mental distress at some time or other. It offers counselling specially for deaf people. SignHealth therapists are all qualified, can use sign language and understand deaf culture. SignHealth also helps deaf people interact and get the most from the NHS. It can provide online BSL/English interpreting in GP surgeries for same-day and short-notice appointments.

Ask your GP for a referral to a SignHealth therapist, or read more about [SignHealth](#) and its services for deaf people.

#### 10. NHS Choices local services search

Find out which [hearing impairment and deaf support services](#) are available from both the NHS and other sources in your local area.