**Common issues and frequently asked questions**

**The local authority says my child is too young to have a radio aid. When is the right age to fit radio aids?**

This will vary according to individual children and the views and wishes of the parents. We believe that parents should be given balanced information about radio aids so that they can make informed choices over when the right time is to try a radio aid with their child.

[Quality standards on the use of personal radio aids](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/documents-and-resources/quality-standards-for-the-use-of-personal-radio-aids-promoting-easier-listening-for-deaf-children/) state that every deaf child should be considered for a radio aid at first hearing aid fitting.

Some professionals feel that children should become established hearing aid or cochlear implant users (or for a stable cochlear implant map to be in place) before a radio aid is introduced. However, this can usually happen reasonably quickly. We do not believe there should be any more of a delay in fitting a cochlear implanted child with a radio aid than with a child with a hearing aid.

Some professionals feel that a radio aid should not be fitted until a child can give feedback on the quality of sound. We do not agree – we believe it is possible to see how a child is benefiting from a radio aid through observation and professional judgement.

**Is it OK for services to require parents to insure radio aids for use at home?**

No. We do not believe that it would be reasonable or fair to deny a child a radio aid that would benefit them simply on the basis of their parents’ insurance arrangements.

We are aware that some parents have been asked to insure radio aids against loss or damage as a condition of the FM system being made available outside school hours. It may be possible to add radio aids to home contents insurance at no additional cost to parents. However, this should not be a requirement. Parents must not be forced to insure their child’s radio aid, and pressure must not be put on families to insure it. Equipment purchased by the local authority remains the local authority's property. Ultimately, it is therefore the local authority's responsibility to make provision for repair or replacement of broken or lost equipment as required.

More information is set out in our position statement [Insurance and Replacement of Hearing Aid Equipment](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/media/4192/charging-insurance-hearing-listening-equipment-position-statement-march-2018.pdf).

We encourage services to work with parents to ensure they are aware of the need to take good care of radio aid devices.

**The local authority wants parents to cover the cost of radio aids through the child’s Disability Living Allowance – is this OK?**

No. The law is clear that schools or local authorities cannot ask families to cover the cost of things that would be regarded as reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Radio aids can be seen as auxiliary aids and public bodies have a reasonable adjustment to provide these to disabled people. Whether the family claims Disability Living Allowance is therefore irrelevant.

Separately, we want to see the provision of radio aids joined up with provision of and maintenance of any other hearing technology that children are using. If families buy their own radio aids, there is a risk it won’t be joined up and the health/education bodies won’t be able to support or maintain.

We recognise that families do sometimes purchase equipment themselves. However, local authorities must not suggest or expect families to do so.

**Are there any safety issues?**

Where an integrated hearing/radio aid is being used, it should be possible to secure the battery so that it is tamperproof and that young children can’t access it.

Otherwise, radio aids usually work by adding a ‘shoe’ to the bottom of the hearing aid. When this is done, this means that the battery on the hearing aid is no longer tamperproof.

In any event, no pre-school deaf child should ever be left unsupervised whilst wearing their hearing aids, whether at home or in nursery settings. Regardless of battery locks, the other parts of the hearing aid are a choking hazard for small children – including, in particular, the radio aid shoe, which the child would have to remove to get to the battery.

You should be given information and support on how to use radio aids effectively and how to watch out for this concern.

More detailed information is available in [our briefing for professionals](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/media/3636/briefing_radio_aid_usage_children_under_36months_2018.pdf) on usage of radio aids with under 3s.

**Where can I find more information about radio aids?**

We have lots of information on [our website](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/products-and-technology/technology-to-borrow-technology-test-drive/listening/radio-aids/) about radio aids and how they can be used in different situations.

You can also watch [a short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGhcSirQnmA) featuring a real-life case study.