Confirmed Hearing Loss in Babies and Children

The news that your child is deaf can come as a great shock. Some parents will be upset, others will be relieved that their suspicions have finally been confirmed.

You will have your own reactions, and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Below you will find some practical information on things you can do to help your child, as well as details on where to get additional support.

Understanding your child’s deafness and treatment options

- There are different levels of deafness. These can be described as a decibel (dB) hearing level (how loud a sound has to be for your child to hear it) or described using terms such as ‘mild’, ‘moderate’, ‘severe’ or ‘profound’. You will have your own reactions, and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Below you will find some practical information on things you can do to help your child, as well as details on where to get additional support.

- Your audiologist will explain more about your child’s level of hearing loss and what this means for your child. Be sure you understand what is being said and ask for any unfamiliar terminology to be explained.

- Your audiologist will also explain how to support your child’s hearing and listening development at home and school.

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- It can be difficult to process all the information your audiologist may share with you during your appointments so if you’re confused about anything and are not able to speak to your audiologist for some time, it’s a good idea to share your concerns with your Health Visitor or GP. They may be able to put you in touch with a local support group where you can get advice and share experiences with both experts and other parents.

- You can find helpful advice on understanding your child’s hearing test on the National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) website: bit.ly/1jyrRc6i

- Hearing aids may be suggested as a treatment option for your child. Hearing aids help people hear as much as possible with the hearing they have. The type and level of your child’s hearing loss will influence any decision to fit a hearing aid and will be carefully considered by your audiologist.

- If your child has profound hearing difficulties and will gain little or no benefit from hearing aids, your audiologist may suggest fitting a cochlear implant, an electronic device that stimulates hearing in children and adults who are severely or profoundly deaf. The implants are fitted during an operation.

- There are other technologies available that may be suitable for your child so be sure to ask your audiologist to outline all the options that may help your child. You can read more on technologies that can assist with hearing on the NDCS website: bit.ly/1sKF9Sd

Getting support

- Your family and friends can be an important source of support for both you and your child, helping your child to feel fully included in family and community life. Sharing information about your child’s condition with them ensures they can support your child in the appropriate manner.

- If you’re feeling isolated and would like to meet other parents of deaf children, speak to your Health Visitor who can put you in touch with local families and support groups.

- You may wish to sign up to the NDCS forum (bit.ly/1pvkbTB) or join the NDCS Facebook page - on.fb.me/SZo5qS - to share experiences with other parents.

Communicating with your child

- Deaf children can learn to communicate through sign or spoken language, or a combination of both. You can find out more about sign language and other ways you can communicate with your child (such as Makaton, for example) on the NHS Choices website: bit.ly/1lelKnM

- It’s important to get your child’s attention before you start talking. Make sure you face your child as much as possible and keep eye contact. Check that background noise is kept to a minimum, speak clearly without shouting, and maintain your normal rhythm of speech.

Getting help at school, nursery or childcare

- It’s important that you tell your child’s teacher or child carer about your child’s hearing so that arrangements can be made to help, such as your child sitting near the front of the class.

- If your child has been diagnosed with a permanent hearing loss you will also be referred to a specialist Teacher of the Deaf who will work with you and your child’s teacher or child care to support their educational and social development.

- Your child may also require a Special Needs Assessment. Ask your child’s teacher or the Special Educational Needs Coordinator at the school for more advice on this.

More information

- More information, resources and parent support is available on the National Deaf Children’s Society website: bit.ly/TgTIwt

- Please note that you need to register to access resources but registration is free of charge. The organisation also operates a helpline on: 0808 800 8880

- Visit NHS Choices for further information on hearing loss here: bit.ly/UqTW5i

For additional fact sheets see www.ihv.org.uk

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