

Reasonable Adjustments for Deaf and Hearing impaired Children in a Nursery/Pre-School Setting

Education providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that deaf CYP are not at a substantial disadvantage when compared with their peers (Equality Act 2010). The list below suggests the *most common* reasonable adjustments which pre-schools and nurseries can make.

Support Clear and Effective Communication:

- Make sure you have the child's attention before you start talking/signing.
- Speak clearly and at your normal pace. Speaking too slowly or exaggerating your mouth patterns will make it harder for a deaf child to understand you. Shouting and whispering also make mouth patterns more difficult to understand.
- When speaking directly to the deaf child always get down to their eye level so they can focus on your speech/sign and tune in to what you are saying.
- Ensure that the deaf child is sitting at an appropriate distance from you – hearing technologies have an optimal range of one to three metres in which to access speech clearly.
- Allow the deaf child to see your face and lips when speaking. Putting something in front of your face or turning away will make it difficult for a child to read facial expressions and lip patterns to follow what is being said.
- Ensure you are not standing with your back to a light source, as a shadow cast across your face can obstruct the deaf child's view.
- For those deaf children who rely particularly on watching your face when you speak, allow them time to move their attention between you and visual support.
- Manage visual distraction, especially with younger children. For instance, think about what you are going to wear, because brightly coloured clothing or large jewellery may be distracting.

Involve Peers

Successful communication with other children plays an important part in every child's social and emotional development and inclusion. Deaf children will need support in this area.

- Encourage even the youngest of children to follow your lead in not covering their faces with hands, hair or objects or looking away when speaking.
- When appropriate, make sure that any teaching is as visual as possible and using sign language with all the children in your setting – this will benefit everyone.
- Make 'quiet zones', where lower levels of noise are encouraged and established, and deaf and other children can take part in quieter activities, such as sharing books, completing puzzles or talking.
- Making specific observations of how the deaf child is able to communicate most effectively with their peers or when communication has been difficult, in order to inform communication activities.

Make the Most of Hearing Technology

(hearing aids, cochlear implants, radio aids)

The child will only benefit from hearing technology if it is:

- working properly
 - worn consistently
 - worn in a good listening environment.
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- all staff need to understand how to use hearing technologies and their limitations
 - a few key members of staff should receive ongoing training to enable them to manage, monitor and maintain the hearing technologies on a day-to-day basis.
 - know what to do if the technology stops working and when to seek advice from a Teacher of the Deaf or audiologist if they are unable to rectify the problem
 - staff should communicate regularly with the child to find out how they feel the technology is working and make regular observations to see if there are any changes in their response to sound. This is particularly important with younger children, who may not articulate their concerns over equipment failure
 - supply and visiting staff should be offered guidance and advice.

Create a Good Listening Environment:

A good listening environment benefits all children. Deaf children in particular will experience difficulty in learning if:

- there is a lot of reverberation and echo in a room (i.e. poor acoustics). Rooms with hard surfaces (large uncovered/painted walls, glass windows and tiled wooden floors) and high ceilings allow sounds to 'bounce around'. This distorts what is heard through the hearing technology worn by the deaf child
- there is a lot of background noise that drowns out the voice of any staff that are speaking. A good listening environment is where the signal-to noise ratio is positive, i.e. the speech of the speaker is much louder than the background noise.

Early years settings can help reduce reverberation by:

- fitting curtains, carpets or blinds
- putting rubber tips or 'hush ups' on the bottom of chair and table legs
- using display drapes on walls
- covering hard surfaces with fabric
- padding the bottom of trays or pencil/pen pots with felt or foam.

Reduce background noise in a setting by doing the following.

- Closing doors to noisy areas or corridors.
- Closing windows to outside noise, closing curtains and blinds if necessary.
- Positioning full bookshelves and cupboards against partition walls (to minimise noise transfer from other rooms).
- Ensuring heating and air conditioning systems operate within acceptable noise levels through regular maintenance.
- Considering strategies to establish and maintain a quiet working atmosphere, such as good behaviour management.
- Encouraging children to develop an understanding of how noises such as chairs scraping, doors banging, dropping objects, shouting and so on can interfere with what their deaf peer can hear.
- Liaising with colleagues to manage noise effectively by, for example, avoiding a situation where a deaf child is in a group carrying out an activity when another group begins their music lesson.

References:

Equality Act (2010)

NDCS Fact sheet, The Equality Act and Your Deaf Child's Education in England, Scotland and Wales

Supporting the Achievement of Hearing Impaired Children in Early Years Settings (For professionals working with children aged 0 to 4)

