

### Hearing Impairment

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Hearing impacts on communication, and early detection can help to minimise associated developmental delays. A diagnosis is required to ascertain the severity of the hearing loss which can vary in degree from very mild to profound.

The types of hearing loss that may be diagnosed include:

Conductive Hearing Loss occurs when there is a problem in the outer and/or middle ear and results in the sounds being unable to reach the inner ear. Ear infections, glue ear, excess wax, fluid behind the ear or ear malformations are possible causes of conductive hearing loss. This type of hearing loss can sometimes be treated medically; however other children may require hearing aids. There may be symptoms of conductive hearing loss including general distress, crying, pulling or rubbing the ears, discharge from the ear canal, apparent disobedience to directions, inattentiveness or frequent colds, teething problems etc. More than one of these symptoms is generally present before a conductive hearing loss is suspected.

Sensorineural hearing loss is caused by nerve damage and is permanent. Medical treatment is not currently available for this type of hearing loss and children with a moderate to profound hearing impairment range would generally wear hearing aids. These hearing losses cause a loss of loudness in addition to a loss of clarity.

A mixed hearing impairment is a combination of conductive and sensorineural hearing loss.

Audiologists will perform different hearing tests according to the child's age and ability to cooperate. A sound proof room is required to conduct all hearing tests to minimise other auditory distractions and ensure full attention is committed to the test. From birth to 7 months, babies would generally participate in a behavioural observation audiometry or distraction test. Hearing in this type of test is measured by noting the level at which the infant shows an awareness of sound. Specialist equipment is now available at some hospitals for testing the hearing of new borns. Visual reinforcement audiometry is done from 8 months to 2.5 years and includes a test which indicates the level at which children turn to sounds presented through loud speakers.

### **Effects on Developmental Areas**

#### **Social and Emotional Development**

- May experience difficulties in socialising due to language delays and inability to understand some conversations
- Children may lack confidence in initiating and participating in social interactions
- Difficulties in hearing may arise in noisy, social interactions

### Physical Development

- Hearing problems due to ear infections may cause associated problems with balance
- Balance may affect ability to co-ordinate gross motor skills

### Language and Communication Development

- Language development may be delayed
- Speech sounds may be unclear
- Children may speak with a nasal or flat tone

### Cognitive Development

- May be effected by lack of ability to interact in some experiences and language delays

### Hearing Impairment Inclusion Strategies

Each child diagnosed with **a Hearing Impairment** will be different and individual. It is important to gain information from the parents as to what characteristics of **Hearing Impairment** their child displays. It is important to work closely with the parents as well as any additional support specialists e.g. therapists who may be involved with the child. It is also important to gain an understanding from the parent as to what is the most important aspect of their child attending your service. What is it that parents hope to gain from using your service? The following inclusion strategies are just some examples which may be applied to support the inclusion process. This list is only the start and it is dependant on a variety of factors such as environment, length of time child is in care, child's interest, likes, dislikes and skills already achieved. The strategies are divided into developmental areas however some strategies overlap and assist in a variety of developmental areas.

### Social and Emotional Development

- Plan group experiences that encourage social interactions and can be played with and without auditory cues.
- Provide experiences that help children to feel safe and secure and don't involve excessive risk taking.
- Encourage peer initiated experiences through inviting other children with similar interests to engage in co-operative play.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in experiences in small groups or with one other - such experiences provide greater security and help to build children's confidence.
- Build children's self esteem through positive and supportive interactions which encourage them to participate actively in the program.

- Support and encourage children's friendships with others.
- Maintain a supportive environment with visual stimulation.
- Avoid creating an environment that is too 'busy' or overcrowded.

### Health and Safety Issues

- Be aware of hearing aids and whether children are able to get water in these.
- Be aware of grommets or tubes and how these may affect participation in experiences that include water play.

### Language and Communication Development

- Be aware of how the child communicates and how much the child can hear in various situations.
- Ensure the child can see your face clearly when you are talking and encourage other children to do the same.
- Speak clearly to children.
- Gain the child's attention first, before speaking or making requests.
- Ensure children clearly understand messages and repeat when necessary.
- Clearly explain new experiences to the child and support this learning through step by step instructions teamed with visual and auditory information.

### Reference

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