

Sensory Inclusion Service information for families re Support during Covid19 situation

During this difficult situation we wanted to ensure that you are kept up to date. It is a changing situation and advice and guidance may change. It is an anxious times for all of us but especially if you have children with additional needs. As things stand today (20/03/20) we have been given clear guidance that we are not to visit homes, schools or settings. Indeed many schools and settings have been closed to external visitors during this week prior to the general closedown today. This may change as things develop.

Despite these difficulties we are going to do our best to support all our CYP. From next Monday (23/03/20) the team have been asked to make contact before the Easter break with all our carers of hearing aid wearers (that includes CI / Ponto/ BAHA). We have asked the teachers of the visually impaired to do the same with the group of children they support. This will be by phone or by `skype` if you have access to that at home. We will endeavour to support you as best we can within the limits of virtual working. I have added a note below around audiology support specifically that has been approved by the departments and sections indicated. We may need to develop more creative ways of working with you moving forward.

Any new referral made to SIS for support will be processed in the normal way however support will be undertaken in the context described above.

Audiology Department RSH / PRH /ENT and SIS **Audiological Services to Children during COVID 19 situation**

Both the Audiology Department, the ENT Department and SIS are committed to try to provide the best service possible during these difficult times. It is also in line with recent guidance from the British Society of Audiology. Following a number of meetings we have put together this plan of action. This is based, I'm sure you can understand on the need to release resources for the task ahead. We recognise this is difficult and may need to be adapted as the situation changes.

Key Points

1. Teachers of the Deaf will contact families on a regular basis whilst they are at home.
2. All hearing aid reviews have now been cancelled – Graham Groves(Educational Audiologist) will contact those who have had an upcoming appointment cancelled and log on the hospital system any particular issues that may need to be followed up at a later date.
3. New referrals : Any child that is diagnosed with a Severe to Profound hearing loss through the newborn hearing test or other tests - These results will be shared with parents, ear moulds taken and child will then be booked into the CHSC clinic and a telephone consultation will happen with ENT Consultant and jointly with Education. Audiology will then fit the hearing aids at a separate appointment. SIS will then consider how best to support. If the loss is less than severe to profound, these will be put on a waiting list for fitting and referral to SIS. SIS will contact any families who are put on the waiting list to offer phone based support.
4. If a hearing aid breaks and it is a bilateral fitting then there is an expectation they will work on one hearing aid (if they have a spare hearing aid they can be fitted with this) and post the broken aid into Audiology or Mark for postal repair. Lost hearing aids will be replaced in the normal way through Mark.
5. If they have a broken mould/ lost moulds the expectation is that children will work on one aid if a mild to moderate loss and will not be prioritised for impressions. We

would encourage families to use an old mould if they have one. If it is a feedback issue they should be encouraged to use a volume control if active. New impressions will only be taken for severe and profound losses and other that are risk assessed by the Audiology Department. Priority will be given to i.e. severe to profound losses - we are assuming that mould manufacturers will be able to keep productivity going. Audiology will make impressions.

6. Hearing aid wearers that have excessive / blocked ears with wax will be given usual advice by Teachers of the Deaf to use Olive oil /Ear Oil and they will ask the screening question of around known perforations /or grommets. If there is any doubt about this parents will be advised NOT to administer
7. Hearing aid wearers who have a runny ear/Infection are advised to see their GP, If GP treatment has not resolved the issue, families are encouraged to ask their GP around how they can address this further through consultation with ENT professionals.
8. CHSC – this is largely cancelled as of today and SIS slots will only be for those children where there is a suspicion that hearing may have deteriorated. At the moment it is not clear if this will be a physical or virtual appointment.
9. Testing hearing aids at home. All families should have access to a hearing aid testing kit at home and would have been given support in how to check hearing aids and other systems. It will be important to carry on checking these daily. If you have items you need (not batteries – see below) that are urgent please contact Mark our Technician. If you need support with checking please contact your TOD who will be able to give you support by phone / forward documents that illustrate how to check
10. Batteries – families are encouraged to get through their GP through their brown books or online <https://www.sath.nhs.uk/wards-services/az-services/audiology/battery/>
11. If you have an FM system at home please remember it is an essential education tool at often not used at home. However if you do use it at home then the guidance for hearing aids applies.

Graham Groves (Educational Audiologist)

Darren McHale (Head of Audiology – Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals)