

Communication strategies: For those communicating with a person with a hearing loss

Information for parents and carers

When someone speaks, clues are gained not only from what is heard but also from what is seen. These clues complement and supplement each other, helping your child to piece together the conversation. Visual clues of speech become very important, so simple actions may make it easier for visual clues to be followed. The following points will help:

- Speak clearly and naturally at a normal pace.
- Make sure you have your child's attention before you talk with them. Try saying their name first, then relay any information once they have "tuned in" to you.
- Avoid speaking from another room, or with your head in a cupboard.
- Keep your face visible and ensure your environment is well lit.
- Try to avoid conversation in the kitchen where there are background noises from food mixers, washing machines and dishwashers etc.
- Do not hide your lip movements behind your hands, paper etc.
- Do not speak while looking down into a newspaper, book etc.
- Keep your head fairly still when speaking.
- Use natural hand gestures but do not exaggerate.
- It is best not to shout or speak too slowly as this distorts your lip patterns.
- Always give your child plenty of time to respond.
- Present instructions in small easy steps to avoid confusion.
- Try to make the subject of conversation as clear as possible.
- Try to use full sentences, rather than just short phrases, as they are easier to understand.
- When you are speaking do not distract the observer's attention with unnecessary hand movements.
- Glasses and sunglasses can sometimes make it difficult to maintain eye contact.
- Keep beards and moustaches trimmed so your mouth is more visible.
- Try to be on the same level as your child so they can see your face clearly.
- When in groups, take turns to talk.
- Avoid speaking to your child with your back to a window where possible as this creates shadows that can make it difficult to read facial expressions or to lip read.
- Repeat the sentence again if necessary and then perhaps rephrase what you want to say. Some words are more difficult to lip-read than others.
- Write down any important facts.
- Most importantly, be patient.

Suggestions for the classroom - Helping children with Conductive Hearing Losses

Some children experience hearing loss which is commonly associated with middle ear problems; the most common being glue ear. Glue ear can fluctuate and can resolve with or without medical treatment. In the meantime children can be at risk for missing of mishearing information in the classroom. Be aware that a child with glue ear may appear as if they are not paying attention or following instructions. Until the glue ear is resolved some children will require classroom management strategies to overcome the muffled and quieter sounds from this hearing loss. The communication strategies below can help to support access to speech and language and education.

- Seat the child close to where the teacher does the majority of the instruction, and away from any obvious sources of noise or distraction.
- Get the child's visual attention before talking to them or to the class.
- Encourage the child to look at your face when you are speaking.
- Speak to the child at a close range using clear speech and a well-projected voice.
- If the child says 'what' or 'huh,' repeat or rephrase what has been said. Remember that the child may not be hearing the instructions clearly, and encourage the child to ask for repetition as needed.
- Move close to the child rather than trying to communicate from a distance.
- Show the child what you mean using a visual example where possible
- The child will most likely miss or mishear comments and questions from other children in the class. It is helpful for the teacher to repeat the questions or comments to the entire class so the child can have access to all parts of the discussion.
- Check that the child understands of spoken instructions before the child begins individual or group work.
- Help the child keep a sense of humour about miscommunications that arise and reinforce that everyone mishears sometimes.
- If the loss is longstanding, technology such as an FM (frequency modulation) system, sound field or amplification system may be recommended. This will need to be funded by the family or included on an EHC (education, health and care) plan.