Radio Aid Guidance/Policy

Deaf Children in Home and Educational Settings

August 2024

Children live and learn in hostile acoustic environments which have traditionally been thought of as formal learning environments. Schools are challenging acoustically and the use of radio amplification in such settings should be considered as standard provision. There is a solid evidence base that the foundations for language are laid in the first years of life. Young children are exposed to language learning when travelling in a car or on public transport, on shopping trips, going to the park, sitting in a front-facing pushchair, at playgroups and at nursery. Radio amplification is ideal for such settings as these are all challenging acoustic environments. Very early use of radio amplification has been shown to offer significant benefits to deaf children.

NDCS Quality Standards - February 2017
Wendy McCracken - Professor of Deaf Education

Candidacy for Receiving a Radio Aid

- **All** children and young people (including preschoolers, whether at home or in an educational setting) with a clinically diagnosed, permanent hearing loss can be considered.
- Assessments and observations of a child's needs will provide evidence-based information to ensure that the system would be helpful for the child or young person (CYP). These may include:
    - hearing levels
    - functional listening skills
    - reliable and consistent use of hearing aids/cochlear implants in the educational and/or home setting
    - speech discrimination assessments
    - language development/ National Curriculum levels / progress made
    - developmental levels / additional difficulties
    - emotional and social development
    - classroom acoustics
    - ease of operation/ suitability of situations
    - compatibility with other equipment already in use
    - pupil voice e.g. LIFE (Listening Inventory for Education)
    - school support
    - family support

CYP in Out of Borough Educational Settings (state-maintained schools)

- CYP at SEN Support - it is the responsibility of the LA in which the school is situated to provide the radio aid and maintain it.
- CYP with EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) - it is the responsibility of the home borough to provide the radio aid.

- **CYP in Independent Educational Settings (schools) All Radio aid equipment will be provided at a charged fee rate. (See our separate charging policy and rental agreement document)**
- CYP at SEN Support - it is the responsibility of the LA in which the school is situated to provide the radio aid and maintain it. (they will have their own charging policy for independent schools)
- CYP with EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) - it is the responsibility of the home borough to provide the radio aid (at a fee for termly use of the Radio Aid equipment) One free visit by technician and other visits will be charged at an hourly rate (see our charging policy for technician visits to Independent schools currently £105 per hour minimum 3 hours per visit will be charged)

Practice Guidelines

- The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Support Team(DHHST) will purchase and loan radio aid systems to CYP in Barnet educational settings and homes and those with an EHCP in out of borough schools.
- The radio aid will initially be loaned for a trial period of 3 months. This will then be reviewed to include listening and language development, academic progress, social interaction and any issues around self-concept.
- Barnet educational settings will agree to take responsibility for the safekeeping of the radio aid system by signing a loan form. Schools should check that their insurance provides cover for lost equipment.
- Where the child is not in an educational setting, families will agree to take responsibility for the safekeeping of the radio aid system.
- For school age CYPs, radio aids can be used outside school hours in agreement with the family, school and the Teacher of the Deaf (TOD). A routine should be agreed to ensure safekeeping, regular charging and management of the radio aid. Parents are responsible for the radio aid and its correct use out of school.
- **In line with the government's NHS National Patient's Safety Alert notice dated 13 December 2019, deaf children under 5 years old will be issued with integrated receivers. If this is not possible, the guidelines in the NDCS Briefing Paper July 2018, 'Radio Aid Usage with Children aged under 36 Months', will be followed. Additionally, in line with the NHS Safety Alert, those who have younger siblings or those with additional risk factors or living with someone with additional risk factors will be considered for integrated receivers.**

- Radio aids will be set up and balanced by Barnet's DHHST or the audiological technician from the Ewing Foundation.
- The CYP's independence in their use of the radio aid and ability to report issues will be supported. The TOD will advise the school on appropriate strategies for progression of these skills.
- The TOD will increase the level of support in the short term in order to support a child and the mainstream staff in becoming used to the new amplification equipment.
- Staff in educational settings will attend any training offered about appropriate use of the radio aid system. TODs will support and train parents in the home environment.
- Written information about the radio aid system, its settings and appropriate use will be shared with the classroom teacher/LSA and Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO).
- A designated member of mainstream school staff will take responsibility for the management of the radio aid system including daily equipment checks.
- The DHHS Team will liaise with audiology and cochlear implant clinics as appropriate.

Lost or broken equipment

- Radio aids are expensive pieces of equipment. All reasonable care needs to be taken of the equipment.
- Losses – schools are responsible for replacing lost items.
- The DHHS team should immediately be informed of breakages or repairs that are required and will arrange repairs or replacement as soon as possible.

This Radio Aid Policy/Guidance was written by the Barnet Deaf and Hard of Hearing Support Team for implementation in homes and educational settings in Barnet. The policy will be reviewed in August 2025.