

The Listening Environment

Hearing technology, no matter how effective, cannot replace or restore normal hearing levels.

However there are lots of practical things you can do to help your child to develop good listening skills. First and foremost, it is important that your child's hearing technology (whether it is a hearing aid, cochlear implant or a BAHA) and additional assistive technology, eg Radio Aid, is working properly.

Your child is dependent on you to make sure they can hear. An early listener won't be able to tell you if there is a problem.

Suggestions for Management of the Listening Environment

If your child is wearing hearing aids, be aware that hearing aids will amplify everything – including the sounds in a noisy background.

- **Be aware of background noise** – Try to keep background noise to a minimum, eg. by turning off the TV or washing machine during family discussions, or when you are directly speaking to your child.
- **Reducing reverberation** - Most homes have lots of soft furnishings, such as carpets, rugs and curtains. This is a good environment for absorbing unwanted background sounds and reducing the effects of reverberation (echo) in the room.
- **Be aware of distance between speaker and child** - When communicating with your baby, in particular, you need to be close to your child, **at their level**, and in a position where s/he can see your face clearly. Always make sure **your face is well-lit** and **do not obscure your face** by turning away or covering your mouth. This is important for hearing aid users, because hearing aids have a specific range for picking up sounds clearly. But it is also important because lip-reading is an important part of how we make sense of what is being said.
- **Create a 'quiet area'** - Although it is recommended that you weave communication with your baby or young child into everyday life, it is often useful to make special provision on a daily basis for quiet communication time with your child in a designated 'quiet' area free from background noise and reverberant surfaces.

Below are some links to resources that may help you to think about your child's listening environment.

The National Deaf Children's Society have collaborated with the University of Sheffield to produce Training videos. [Video 4](#) goes into detail about how to create an ideal listening environment for a child with a hearing loss.

The [Hearing First](#) website also have some useful tips to make your home environment more acoustically friendly for your deaf child.

Questions for you to consider about your child's listening environment

1. Is your extended family and childcare provider deaf aware?
2. Does your child need to listen to instruction from an adult outside?
3. What about your child listening to the TV?
4. What happens when the phone rings or the doorbell goes?
5. Your child's safety when outside the house.
6. What about talking and listening in the car?
7. What makes the most noise in your household? For parts of the day or all day long?

Radio Aids and other Listening Technology

There are many useful pieces of technology that may help your child to access speech in a noisy background, eg Radio Aids, mini-mics.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) operate a loans system for families who would like to trial a piece of equipment. You can access information about the Test-Drive scheme by clicking on this [link](#).

* The Education Authority Sensory Service is not responsible for the content of the resources linked on this page nor does it constitute endorsement

For further advice please contact the Sensory Service via phone: 028 25 661 258 or email: sensoryservice@eani.org.uk

