**EA Sensory Service**  

# CONDUCTIVE HEARING LOSS

Conductive hearing loss occurs when there is some problem or abnormality in the outer or middle ear. The most common form of conductive deafness is glue ear. This has been likened to listening to the world with a finger in each ear.

Glue ear is a term used to describe thick fluid in the middle ear. This fluid affects the conduction of sound across the middle ear cavity. This feels like sensations of bubbling, swishing or fullness. A young child may not alert adults to these sensations and may not be aware that sensitivity to sound is reduced. Other causes of this kind of hearing loss include:

* obstructions in the ear canal eg wax, tiny foreign objects etc;
* narrow ear canals – typical of some Down’s Syndrome children;
* malformations of the ear.

## Identification

Unfortunately conductive hearing losses can often go undetected and the level of deafness may **fluctuate**. These children can pass their hearing screen tests in school and it is common to find such children described as lazy, disruptive or dull.

Warning signs include:

* history of ear infections – including discharging ears (often foul smelling);
* failed screening tests of hearing;
* mouth breathing, snoring, catarrh, ear discharge;
* presenting as dreamy, distractible disruptive or demanding;
* poor attention and listening skills;
* difficulty attending to speech;
* limited vocabulary, poor language structure or poor speech intelligibility;
* irritability, feeling listless, frequent upsets, poor motivation;
* pace of learning fluctuating, tiring quickly, discrepancy between verbal and practical skills;
* the need to have the TV volume turned up, may not turn when called;
* reading difficulties – confused by phonics and sound discrimination;
* delay in responding to speech or even in responding to name;
* unusual clinginess (in case of a very young child);
* complaining about noises in the ear (tinnitus).

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