**EA Sensory Service**  

# Understanding Your Child’s Hearing Tests

After birth, your child will have been offered a Newborn hearing screen test as part of the Newborn hearing screening programme (NHSP). Further information about the NHSP can be found [here](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2021-03/Your%20baby%27s%20hearing%20screen%20English%200321.pdf). There are two types of Newborn hearing screening tests. These are:

* Automated Otoacoustic Emission (AOAE) test
* Automated Auditory Brainstem Response (AABR) test

These tests are painless and are usually completed when your baby is asleep. This [video](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/newborn-screening/hearing-test/) gives more information on these hearing tests.

If it seems likely that a baby has a hearing loss, s/he may be referred to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Specialist for further testing and on to the Audiology department.

The Audiologist will carry out a range of hearing tests, as your child grows. The initial NHSP tests are designed not to require a response from your baby but as your child develops, they will be required to give varying behavioural responses. The type of test conducted will depend on the individual child. A general overview of the type of tests available are as follows:

* **Visual Reinforcement Audiometry (VRA):** Approximately between the ages of 6-36 months, VRA will require your child to react to a range of sounds usually by turning to look at the sound source.
* **Play Audiometry:** From around the age of 18 months until approximately 5 years old, your child’s hearing test may take the form of play audiometry whereby your child will be asked to perform a simple task when they hear the sound eg. stack a block or complete a puzzle. The sound may be presented through headphones.
* **Pure Tone Audiometry:** This type of testing is usually for older children and requires them to press a button when the sound is made through their headphones. This helps to generate a picture of the frequencies that the child is able to access. The sounds are gradually reduced to the quietest level that the child can hear.
* **Bone Conduction Test:** Bone Conduction Testing helps to ascertain the part of the ear that is causing the hearing loss. A small band with a vibrating pad is placed on your child’s head. As with Pure Tone Audiometry, the child will be required to press a button to indicate that they have heard the sound.
* **Speech Audiometry:** Speech Audiometry is often referred to as Speech Discrimination testing and is used to establish the child’s ability to discriminate between a range of speech sounds. The most common Speech Discrimination test is the McCormick Toy Test, whereby children are asked to select a requested object from a range of objects placed in front of them. The each object is paired with a similar sounding object eg. cup/duck, tree/key. This test determines the softest level that the child can both hear and discriminate speech.

Your child will likely continue to attend regular hearing tests, to help the Audiologist build up an increasingly accurate picture of your child’s hearing loss.

The [Hearing.org](https://www.babyhearing.org/hearing-tests-to-expect-as-your-child-grows) website and [Beacon Audiology](https://www.beaconaudiology.com/diagnostic-audiology/child-hearing) websites have links to videos which outline each of the hearing tests that your child may encounter as they develop.

The National Deaf Children’s Society website has information on each of the various hearing tests. You can find the [link](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/childhood-deafness/hearing-tests/) here to access the information. They have also produced a downloadable document entitled ‘Understanding Your Child’s Hearing Test’. You can find the link [here](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/documents-and-resources/understanding-your-childs-hearing-tests/) to access the document.

\* 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