



Service Specification for the Sensory Service



South Tyneside Council



Our aim

Our aim is that all hearing and visually impaired children in South Tyneside are fully included in their chosen community and can access the opportunities available to all children.

We provide help and advice to children, their parents / carers, family members and staff in schools and other settings. We have a wide range of professionally-qualified specialist staff who work with children according to their needs.

Assessment

Initially we provide advice and guidance for children whose vision is corrected by wearing glasses or those who can cope satisfactorily without using hearing aids. If the difficulties are more pronounced, we carry out an assessment to establish the right level of support. This involves looking at how the child copes with the level of hearing or sight they have and promoting the best possible use of their existing hearing and vision through regular monitoring and assessment. We aim to assess each child twice each year, and we provide a report after each assessment.

Teaching and support

We encourage progress through specialist teaching and support sessions up to a maximum of 5 sessions per week. This support is closely matched to need and is usually delivered in the child's own school or other setting. Where possible, we provide reports and attend review meetings for children at School Action Plus or above. We can provide technical support for the specialist communication aids that are sometimes used, along with help in applying for funds to purchase this equipment.

Support for families

Looking after a child with sensory impairments can be a daunting task, so we provide advice and support in the home to family members, parents and carers of all pre-school sensory impaired children. We also help parents to access a range of other services so that they can get the best support that's available.

Training

We know that teaching children with sensory impairments brings extra challenges, so we provide training to school staff to help them. This can cover the more technical aspects such as equipment or techniques, but it also covers knowledge and awareness issues for fellow pupils. This is available for schools in both the teaching timetable, for example PSHE lessons, and pastoral activities such as assemblies. We need to make a charge to cover our costs - contact us for details.

Availability

We provide family support, early years support and the Neonatal Hearing Screen all year round. Teaching and support staff are only available to schools during term times.

In order to maintain effective delivery of the service, our staff are active in ongoing professional development, up to a maximum of 5 school days per year. There will also be times when staff are unavailable due to illness or other unexpected circumstances.

Whilst we try to help as much as we can, when staff are absent due to training or sickness schools need to make their own cover arrangements.

Response time

All children will be seen and assessed within a fortnight of referral, but we aim for a shorter response time if possible. Under the terms of the Neonatal Hearing Screen all newly diagnosed hearing impaired children will be seen within 48 hours of diagnosis.

Accessing the service

We provide monitoring, teaching or support as appropriate to all hearing aid wearers aged 0 to 19 in South Tyneside. Hearing impaired children without hearing aids can be referred for initial assessment and advice. These criteria are based on National Deaf Children's Society guidelines.

Access for visually impaired children is based on visual acuity being less than 6/18, depending on the nature of the child's condition. These criteria are based on World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

The majority of referrals are made via hospital services and we contact schools and other settings following the diagnosis of each child. Referrals from schools and other settings can be made initially by telephone and we will advise on how best to proceed. Referrals can also be made via the Wellbeing Panels where several services are involved.

Funding

The Sensory Service is funded by South Tyneside council. We provide staff free of charge to schools from a fixed staffing complement and support is based on a needs assessment. Schools should match-fund additional support for children where non-teaching support is needed.

In some circumstances funding through the Early Years Panel may be possible for children with additional needs who need to access a provision prior to their statutory year and would be otherwise unable to do so.



Responsibilities of colleagues in schools and other settings

We work in partnership with colleagues in schools and other settings. To provide the best support we can, we depend on school staff being released for liaison and training/development outside of normal teaching hours and an appropriate, quiet place to work being made available in the school. When children are absent from school or involved in activities that might affect their work, we should be informed. Schools and settings should make their own arrangements for cover of our staff for their training days each year as well as in the case of illness or other absence.



Contact details

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If you know someone who would like this information in a different format contact the communications team on 0191 424 7385.