
Paediatric audiology services

What audiology services are provided for children?

The Paediatric Audiology Service, which is based at Addenbrooke's Hospital, provides audiological assessment and care for children living within the Cambridge catchment.

The ages of children seen range from newborn to school-leaving age. We can care for children with multiple disabilities, those who are difficult to assess for any reason and for children who are at increased risk of permanent hearing loss. When testing children's hearing, it is important that an appropriate method is used based on the child's age, ability and interest, and one that will give the information that is required. Some tests require children to be alert, awake, co-operative and happy to "play" with the Audiologist (Behavioural Tests). Others require the child to be quiet and still or asleep (Objective Tests).

The Paediatric Audiologists have considerable experience assessing the hearing of children. Tests selection will be based upon observations of the child in the clinic and the information given by the parents. Some test procedures require the child to be anaesthetised. Our policy is to ALWAYS attempt to obtain Behavioural Test results first, the information produced is generally more informative with regard to the degree and nature of the hearing loss.

What are the aims of the service?

We aim initially to accurately evaluate the hearing levels of the child and identify any difficulties. The degree, extent and nature of any hearing loss is confirmed as quickly as possible and an estimation made of the impact these difficulties are likely to have on the child.

If hearing loss is identified, what can be done?

When a hearing loss is identified in a child, appropriate audiological support is provided. This might involve simply monitoring the situation or might involve the fitting of a hearing aid. Audiological support continues regardless of whether the option of aid fitting is chosen (see below).

When are hearing aids necessary?

We consider that it is most appropriate to fit a hearing aid for a child when a significant and

permanent hearing loss is present.

The selection of a particular aid is based upon the hearing needs of the child, which are determined using internationally recognised methods. Fine tuning of the aid can be made as needed. Both the child's hearing levels and the use and effectiveness of a hearing aid are reviewed regularly.

For all children, the approach taken by the Audiology Department is not solely restricted to 'the ears' problems. Close contact is maintained with medical and education services, and we know that if we take advice and feedback from all these groups, we can ensure that care can be individualised for a child.