Audiology Department

Assistive listening devices

Hearing aids can be a great help but other devices, known as assistive listening devices may also help with the following situations such as:

- Using telephones (landline and mobile)
- Watching television or listening to the radio
- Alerting devices (doorbell, telephone ringing, baby monitor, smoke alarm)
- Listening to talks, lectures and in meetings
- Listening in the theatre, cinema and other events

In some cases equipment can be provided by social services or can be privately purchased. Further advice and some demonstrations are available at the hospital. Please contact the audiology department.

Telephones

Hearing on the telephone is a common problem. Usually sound quality and volume can be improved by holding the receiver to your hearing aid, above your ear. The positioning is very important. If you continue to have difficulty hearing or you have interference it may be worth considering buying a special phone designed for people with hearing difficulties. These phones can have the following helpful features: volume control, a speakerphone and may be compatible with loop systems. For people who cannot hear on the phone it is possible to use textphones or the next generation text service www.ngts.org.uk.

Mobile phones

Always try a new phone with your hearing aid to check it works well. If you experience interference or frequently use a phone you may find it helpful to use an accessory which can wirelessly connect your hearing aid to the phone. Even if you cannot hear well enough to make calls you can still send text messages (SMS). You will need to text “Register” to “999” to contact emergency services by text.

Alerting devices

Devices are available to alert you in the home to things like the doorbell, telephone ringing, a baby alarm, smoke alarm or to help you hear if someone you care for needs assistance. The devices can alert you by making a louder sound, vibrating or by flashing lights. They are often portable. Paging systems are available to alert you to several different warnings.
Smoke alarms

Smoke detectors have loud alarms but they may not be loud enough to wake you from sleep. Smoke alarms are available which have flashing lights and a vibrating pad which goes under your pillow. Contact your local Sensory Services Team or Fire Service (www.fireservice.co.uk) for more details.

Outside the home

At cinemas loop systems, headsets and captioned showings are often available. Check with your local cinema for details. At theatres loop systems, headsets, signed and captioned showings are available. Contact your local theatre for details and mention your needs when booking tickets.

Television and radio

Many people can happily listen to the television or radio using their normal hearing aids but often a clearer sound can be obtained using devices which send the sound to your hearing aid, headphones or wireless speaker. Standard headphones can work but these often turn off the TV speakers so nobody else can hear the TV. Alternatives include TV listeners or loop systems which plug into the back of the television and send the sound to your hearing aid (on the loop setting) or to a cordless headset. Subtitles can make it easier to follow television programmes particularly if the programme has lots of background noise. If you are buying new equipment, check that it has the features you need. If possible see if you can have a demonstration or trial.

Portable music players

You can connect hearing aids to portable music players using the loop system or direct input wires with a suitable hearing aid connector (called a shoe). There are even solutions if you only have one hearing aid or if you can only hear in one ear.

Loop systems

Loop systems are special listening systems which transfer sound directly to your hearing aid, reducing background noise. Loop systems are available in public buildings such as meeting rooms, lecture theatres, places of worship, shop and bank counters. Switching the hearing aid to the loop programme can help you hear the person talking into the system better whilst cutting out the background noise around you. See your hearing aid instruction booklet for details of how to use the loop programme (sometimes called telecoil or “T”).

Streamers

Most hearing aid manufacturers produce an additional device which can be purchased in order to wirelessly stream sounds from Bluetooth devices (for example mobile phones, music players or computers) and special accessories (for TV, landline phone or
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remote microphone). Further information is available on the hearing aid manufacturer websites, equipment retailers or from the audiology department.

Personal listening devices

Personal listening devices can help you hear in meetings, lectures, in the car and many other situations. They work by placing a microphone near the person you are listening to. The sound is sent to the hearing aid either through a wire or through a wireless system. The wireless systems tend to be more expensive. This equipment is usually purchased privately but if the equipment is used for work ask about the ‘Access to Work’ scheme.

Apps and smart home devices

There are a number of apps for use on smart phones that may be helpful for people with a hearing loss. This can include speech-to-text, alerting, chat as well as apps for specific situations such as viewing lyrics when listening to music. This area is rapidly changing and we cannot recommend specific apps but we suggest that you check reviews, check whether there are charges and protect your devices from viruses and malware. More information is available from Action on Hearing Loss and Hearing Link in addition to hearing aid manufacturers and app stores.

There are an increasing number of appliances and devices for the home that can be connected to smartphone or a smart home speaker system. For example, it is possible to control a door entry system or know when the washing machine is finished. Although not specifically designed for people with hearing loss it a new way to monitor and control devices which can be particularly useful if you have difficult hearing alerting sounds.

Equipment purchase

The following organisations produce catalogues which include a range of assistive listening equipment:

Sarabec (Please quote “Add” when ordering)
Telephone: 01642 247789 Email: mail@sarabec.co.uk
Textphone: 01642 251310 Web: www.sarabec.com

Action on Hearing Loss (Please quote “ADDENBRK” when ordering)
Telephone: 03330 144525 Textphone: 03330 144530
Email: solutions@hearingloss.org.uk
Web: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Connevans (Please quote “Add01” when ordering Phonak products)
Telephone: 01737 247571 Email: info@connevans.com
Textphone: 01737 644016 Web: www.connevans.info
Please check the terms and conditions with the company before ordering and check postage charges. Certain items are exempt from VAT if you are D/deaf or hearing impaired by completing a form with your order. It helps support our demonstration service if you quote the above codes if you order equipment.

**Social Services**

Social services can often assess individuals for equipment to help with hearing difficulties. The services which can be offered depend on your local social services. If you would like to be referred you can either contact your local services directly or ask the Audiology Department to make a referral for you. Usually you will complete an assessment over the telephone or arrangements will be made to visit you in your own home but many services also have an online self-referral form.

**Cambridgeshire Sensory Services**

Telephone: 0345 045 5202  
Email: careinfo@cambridgeshire.gov.uk  
Web: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/careandsupport

**Norfolk Sensory Support** (Deafblind and BSL users)

Telephone: 0344 800 8020  
Textphone: 0344 800 8011  
Email: information@norfolk.gov.uk  
Web: www.norfolk.gov.uk

**Suffolk Sensing Change**

Telephone: 01473 260030  
Textphone: 01473 711825  
Email: info@sensingchange.org.uk  
Web: www.sensingchange.org.uk

**Essex ECL**

Telephone: 03330 133 262  
Textphone: 01245 261715  
Email: sensoryservices@essexcares.org  
Web: www.eclsensoryservice.org

**Hertfordshire Sensory Services**

Telephone: 0300 123 4042  
Textphone: 01992 555506  
Web: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/adults

**Bedfordshire Borough Council**

Telephone: 01234 718318  
SMS: 07748 760191  
Email: HearingImpairment@bedford.gov.uk  
Web: www.bedford.gov.uk
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