

2. Introduction

Personal radio aids have the potential to greatly enhance deaf children's listening experiences by making speech more audible in situations where distance, background noise and reverberation make listening difficult.

The following quality standards set out a common approach to the timely and appropriate provision of radio aids.

This resource is split into two parts.

1. A set of quality standards relating to the use of radio aids – also known as personal FM systems.
2. The *Good Practice Guide for Radio Aids* contains practical information and strategies to achieve these quality standards and is available on the websites of the UK Children's FM Working Group, (www.fmworkinggroup.org.uk) and the Ewing Foundation (www.ewing-foundation.org.uk).

You should only implement recommendations from this resource after full consultation with parents.

Terminology

We use the term '**radio aid**' to mean 'radio aid' or 'FM radio aid systems'.

Sound enhancement systems are designed to benefit all children in a classroom and are therefore different from personal radio aids. The terms **soundfield system** or **soundfield radio system** are used to describe products that use radio or digital technology rather than an infra-red or other transmission system. This resource doesn't include comprehensive information about the use of soundfield systems and only discusses them in relation to their use with radio aids and the benefits of the different technologies.

Child or **children** refers to any baby, child or young person, aged from 0–25 years.

Teaching assistant (TA) is used to describe a range of support staff working with deaf children. Titles used in local settings may vary.

QS is an abbreviation for quality standards.

Who is this resource for?

This resource is for those who commission services for deaf children and for practitioners who work with them.

Its purpose is to:

1. provide realistic and attainable quality standards that health and education services should audit against
2. describe good practice for the selection, fitting, management and evaluation of radio systems for children.

Knowledge, practice and technology are evolving all the time. It's vital that you keep up to date with developments and consult the UK Children's FM Working Group website www.fmworkinggroup.org.uk as the *Good Practice Guide for Radio Aids* will be updated regularly and will reflect changes in technology.

Context

Under the Equality Act 2010,⁵ local authorities and education settings in Great Britain have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure deaf children are not disadvantaged. This includes a specific duty to provide 'auxiliary aids' where they're needed. Radio aids are regularly cited as an example of an auxiliary aid.

You must also consider the legislative frameworks for children with special educational needs or additional learning needs in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. These all highlight the importance of early intervention and multi-agency working. For example, in England, the Children and Families Act 2014⁶ introduces a new duty on education and health services to work together to jointly commission services and meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Historically, educational audiologists or Teachers of the Deaf have fitted and managed radio aids. They work collaboratively with children, families and others including mainstream teachers, TAs, and technicians. Fitting radio aids effectively also requires the involvement of paediatric audiologists and staff in auditory implant teams. For a radio aid to be effective, the individual hearing aid or implant needs to be appropriately programmed and fitted with the radio aid receiver. However, it's now becoming more common for aids or implants to have integrated radio aid receivers. Professionals across agencies must work together to ensure that this equipment is fitted, used and maintained well.

5. Equality and Human Rights Commission. Equality Act. 2010. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents (accessed 24 January 2017).

6. Department for Education (DFE). Children and Families Act. 2014. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted (accessed 24 January 2017).



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Equipment and training

Those coordinating the provision of radio aids should:

- have access to the necessary test equipment
- have up-to-date knowledge and skills so that they are able to follow the procedures described in this resource
- follow published guidelines where appropriate
- understand the legislative requirements relating to services and provision.



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Inter-agency working

- It's essential that education and health professionals set up communication channels for sharing information about a child's hearing care.⁷
- The information you give to families must be unbiased, comprehensive, clear, accessible and accurate. Parents must receive all information in their preferred language and in accessible formats, and they should also be able to ask questions.



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7. *Modernising Children's Hearing Aid Services: Guidelines for Professional Links between Audiology and Education Services within a Children's Hearing Aid Service*. 2005. www.research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/mchas/aboutus/guidelines (accessed 20 January 2017).