

Radio Aid Policy

'Every deaf child should be considered as a potential candidate for provision with a personal radio aid....' QS1 (Quality Standards for the use of personal radio aids, National Deaf Children's Society 2017).

The Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (BSCS) currently provides around 300 children and young people (CYP) aged 0-25 years with assistive listening devices (radio aids). This number includes pre school aged children at home, those in early years settings and mainstream schools, those in special schools and those who attend the Berkshire Local Authority Hearing Impairment Resource Bases.

A separate arrangement is made for students attending colleges or independent schools.

The Service aims to meet QS1 through effective management of the specialist equipment budget which takes account of the available resources.

Radio aids are purchased by the Service and issued to individual named CYP. Currently, the majority of the equipment are Phonak systems although the Service does support a small number of other systems which may be more appropriate to meet the specific hearing aid or cochlear implant technology needs.

Radio aids are expensive pieces of equipment: a transmitter and two receivers cost around £1600. It is therefore *essential* that the equipment is looked after and kept safely by the school and the family if used at home.

Under the Equality Act 2010, local authorities and education settings have a duty to 'make reasonable adjustments' to ensure that deaf children are not disadvantaged. There is a specific duty to provide 'auxiliary aids' when they are needed. A radio aid is an example of an 'auxiliary aid'.

Pre-school children

- Radio aids are issued by the Service following discussion with the family, Teacher of the Deaf (ToD), health professionals and the BSCS Educational Audiologist. The timing of the issue of the equipment will be led by these discussions and will be different for each child

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service working in partnership with Local Authorities:
RBWM, Slough, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire

Central Office: Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service, Town Hall,
St. Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1RF

- All children under 3 are fitted with integrated, tamperproof receivers in line with health and safety guidance issued by Phonak so that the younger child is unable to access the batteries in the hearing aids
- The Teacher of the Deaf will support the management of the Radio Aid at home and work with parents to develop their knowledge and expertise in using the equipment effectively, ensuring that it is working optimally
- If the equipment is no longer working or a fault is identified it will be sent off for repair by the Service. A temporary replacement, *if available*, may be given
- When the young person reaches statutory school age, at the next hearing aid upgrade the integrated receivers will be replaced with ear level detachable receivers. This allows for the continued upgrading of hearing aid models and facilitates the continuity of optimal listening through the radio aid system. The use of ear level receivers ensures the sustainability of provision for all pupils across Berkshire as it enables compatibility with any future upgraded hearing aid technology
- For children who have cochlear implants the decision and timing of the issue of a radio aid will be determined in collaboration with the family and the Cochlear Implant Centre

School-aged pupils

- The BSCS continue to provide radio aids for pupils in mainstream schools, special schools and for those who attend Local Authority Resource provision
- In school all pupils use ear level receivers in line with the BSCS policy on the management of effective resources and sustainability of provision as outlined above. Pupils who previously had integrated receivers will transfer to ear level detachable receivers at the next hearing aid upgrade as part of the planned management pathway between the Service and Audiology. This enables a seamless transition and continuity of optimal listening with the radio aid
- The school are required to sign a 'Loan Form' to accept responsibility for the cost of the replacement of any lost equipment on the school premises. If the equipment is well-managed in the school setting the risk of losing the radio aid or receivers is low and the need for replacing the equipment should not arise
- Schools are asked to ensure they have a procedure for keeping the equipment safe in school and that the young person is able to access their equipment easily at the beginning of the day and are able to charge it at night
- In the event of a piece of equipment no longer working, the Teacher of the Deaf will check and identify any faults and if necessary will arrange for the system to be sent for repair. This may mean that the pupil is without their equipment for a short period of time. A temporary replacement, *if available*, may be given.
- The radio aid may be taken home to facilitate access to extra curricular activities and groups outside school. This needs to be agreed with the school and the visiting Teacher of the Deaf and a home loan form filled in by the family, whereby they accept responsibility for looking after the equipment. The form will be made available by the visiting Teacher of the Deaf

Colleges and Independent Schools

Colleges and Independent schools are able to enter into an agreement to hire radio aids from BSCS. The cost of the hire is dependent on the equipment required and the contract includes set up and ongoing maintenance of the equipment by a qualified Teacher of the Deaf.

These specialists visits are required as a condition of the agreement throughout the loan period and are included in the cost of the hire arrangements. The minimum loan period is one academic year.

Balancing and verifying educational amplification

The Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service use the *Quality Standards for the use of personal radio aids, National Deaf Children's Society 2017* as the Gold Standard

QS3 states that

The personal radio aid must be set up with the child's individual hearing aids or implants to ensure that the radio signal provides the desired advantage.

- The Teacher of the Deaf and/or the Educational Audiologist will set up the radio aid and balance the additional equipment to the personal amplification (hearing aids or cochlear implants)
- The radio aid will routinely be verified in the testbox by the visiting Teacher of the Deaf, at intervals recommended in the Good Practice Guide for Radio Aids

QS4 states that

The child's listening response must be checked with the complete system in place

- Radio Aids will be objectively verified once per year using the SPiN Procedure (Speech in Noise) and subjectively via user feedback

References

Quality Standards for the use of personal radio aids, National Deaf Children's Society 2017 www.ndcs.org.uk

Good Practice Guide for Radio Aids www.fmworkinggroup.org.uk