

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service
Good Outcomes Positive Futures



Equipment Policy Policy last reviewed: July 2025

Agreed by: Leadership and Management Team

Shared with staff: July 2025

Frequency of review: Every two years

Date of next review: July 2027

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Introduction

Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (BSCS) have high aspirations for the achievement of all our children and young people (CYP) and are committed to ensuring they are able to thrive socially and academically, have good access to their educational environment and have the right support and at the right time, to meet their potential.

Some learners will require a range of specialist equipment to facilitate their access and participation in learning activities. Under the Equality Act (2010), all education providers must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services, to avoid students with disabilities being placed at a 'substantial disadvantage'.

All the specialist equipment provided by BSCS is the property of the six Unitary Authorities as part of the Berkshire Joint Arrangement cContract.

BSCS currently provides specialist equipment for young people (CYP) aged 0-25 years who are deaf, or who have a vision or multisensory impairment, at home, in early years settings, mainstream schools, special schools and those who attend the Berkshire Local Authority Resource Bases.

A separate arrangement is made for students attending Post-16 settings or independent schools.

Specialist equipment is purchased by the Service and issued to individually named CYP. Loan, and where necessary, hire forms must be in place before the equipment is issued.

All specialist equipment is expensive. It is therefore *essential* that the equipment is looked after and kept safely by the school and the family if used at home.

There are different arrangements for different ages and educational phases and on transition to adulthood. These arrangements are outlined in this document.

Reviewed 7.7.25

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The policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

CYP who are deaf / have a hearing loss

1. Pre-school children

- Assistive Listening Technology e.g. radio aids may be issued by the Service following discussion with the family, Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD), 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 young person.
- The Teacher of the Deaf will support the management of the Assistive Listening Technology at home and work with parents to develop their knowledge and expertise in using the equipment effectively, ensuring that it is working optimally
- 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
- Should the equipment develop a fault, it will be sent off for repair by the Service. A temporary replacement, *if available*, may be given
- Parents/carers are asked to sign the *Parent/Carer contract* to say that they will look after the equipment- they are not financially responsible for lost equipment, although they can put it on their home insurance if they choose to.

2. School-aged pupils

- BSCS continue to provide radio aids for pupils in mainstream schools, special schools and for those who attend Local Authority Resource provision
- The school is 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 it 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 Assistive Listening Technology may be taken home to facilitate access to extra curricular activities and groups outside school. This must be agreed with the school and the visiting Teacher of the Deaf and a home loan form completed 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

3. Colleges of Further Education

- If a CYP is in 6th form in a mainstream school then the CYP will continue to have the same access to equipment from BSCS as they had throughout their secondary education.
- The provision of specialist equipment for CYP who are deaf in colleges is different. Colleges are asked to enter into an agreement to hire the Assistive Listening Technology from the BSCS. Specialist visits from the QToD are required as a condition of the hire agreement throughout the loan period and are charged

separately. The minimum loan period is for one academic year and a loan form must be in place.

CYP with a Vision Impairment

The Technology needs of a CYP are assessed by the Qualified Teacher of Pupils with Vision Impairment (QTVIs) or the Registered Qualified Habilitation Specialists (RQHS). Individual needs are identified through assessment and it is recognised that needs may be met through advice, strategies and or provision of equipment. Some learners may require low level adaptations and/or mainstream technology, whilst others will require specialist VI equipment provided by the Service.

The equipment needs of children and young people at school are not necessarily the same as in their own homes, although care is taken to maintain a consistent approach. Some children may be assessed as needing to take their loaned equipment home.

Consideration is given to the most cost-effective method of addressing the assessed need. Assessing staff will include in their assessment advice on the need for adaptations/ specialist equipment and will liaise with the educational setting and parents as appropriate.

VI Specialist equipment may include: manual and electronic braille devices, resources to create tactile materials, audio devices, screenwriting software, iPads with screens greater than 12" (usually for very large print users N48+ that require a personal device for all-day curriculum access), touchscreen laptops/Microsoft tablets (usually for very large print users N48+ that require a personal device for all-day curriculum access). Further details are given in Appendix 2.

Pre-schools, schools and colleges are responsible for providing mainstream technology, for example standard laptops and iPads, to access the curriculum in line with their responsibility to make other 'reasonable adjustments' to enable access for CYP with a disability. Where a QTVI assesses there is a need for VI Specialist equipment it will be provided on loan by the BSCS. Small items under £100 (Primary) and £150 (Secondary) must also be provided by the educational setting for example sloping desks, writing implements, talking scales, headphones and consumable tactile materials.

Pre school children

- VI specialist equipment for home use, where required, is issued by the Service following discussion with the family and QTVI. The timing of the issue of the equipment will be led by these discussions and will be different for each child
- The QTVI will support the management of any specialist equipment 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.
- Parents/carers are asked to sign the *Parent/Carer contract* to say that they will look after the equipment and to put it on their home insurance.

Children in schools

- VI specialist equipment, where required, is issued by the Service following discussion with the school, family and QTVI. The timing of the issue of the equipment will be led by these discussions and will be different for each child
- The school is required to sign a 'Loan Form' to accept responsibility for the cost of the replacement of any lost or damaged equipment on the school premises. If the equipment is well-managed in the school setting the risk loss or repair 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 QTVI 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
- In some circumstances, the equipment may be taken home to facilitate access to learning outside school. This needs to be agreed with the school and the visiting QTVI and a home loan form completed by the family, whereby they accept responsibility for looking after it.

Post-16 Education and Training

- If a CYP is in 6th form in a mainstream school then the CYP will continue to have the same access to equipment from BSCS as they had throughout their secondary education.
- The provision of VI Specialist equipment for Post-16 Colleges of Further Education is different. The Colleges are asked to enter into an agreement to hire recommended specialist equipment from the Service. The cost of the hire is dependent on the equipment required.
- Specialist visits from a QTVI/MSI are required as a condition of the hire agreement throughout the loan period and are charged separately. The minimum loan period is for one academic year and a loan form must be in place.
- Where a young person begins an apprenticeship from age 16, they or their employer will apply for specialist equipment devices through Access to Work.

Independent Schools - All pupils with Sensory Impairment (SI)

For CYP who attend Independent schools, the schools are able to enter into an agreement to hire recommended specialist equipment from BSCS. The cost of the hire is dependent on the equipment required.

Specialist visits from a QTOD/QTVI/QTMSI are required as a condition of the hire agreement throughout the loan period and are charged separately. The minimum loan period is for one academic year and a loan form must be in place.

Specialist Schools for SI

It is the expectation that Specialist SI schools will provide specialist equipment in line with what is listed in the EHCP.

CYP on roll of a Berkshire school with the home LA outside of Berkshire and who have an Education, Health and Care Plan

Home LA provides the equipment which must be from the range of equipment used confidently within the BSCS. Otherwise the LA must hire the equipment in line with the BSCS equipment loan policy.

CYP with a EHCP who live in Berkshire and are on roll of a non Berkshire school

The home LA (Berkshire) would provide the equipment, this will need to be funded by the LA responsible for the EHCP. If different equipment is required the home LA will decide if they want the BSCS to purchase the equipment on their behalf or whether they will request the local sensory support service to purchase it and charge the home LA.

As part of transition the 2 services will discuss the specific needs of the child.

Special Schools

Non Sensory Impairment Specialist schools

For out of county children the cross border equipment policy, as above, is still relevant.

Electively Home Schooled CYP with SI

Parents /Carers can hire BSCS specialist equipment following an assessment of need by the QTVI/ QTOD for which there is a visit charge. The range of equipment on offer will be from within the current list of equipment we currently provide.

Education otherwise than in a school (EOTIS)

EOTIS is sometimes known as EOTAS. EOTIS provision has been agreed with the Local Authority and therefore specialist equipment from the Service can be provided free of charge.

Appendix 1:

Balancing and verifying educational amplification

The Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service uses 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

Appendix 2:

BSCS VI Specialist Equipment List

Specialist VI adaptive technology devices loaned by BSCS include:

- Manual Braille writers
- Electronic Braille writers
- Braille Notetakers
- Braille displays
- Qwerty and braille combined displays
- Large print qwerty keyboards for ios and Windows
- Audio players
- Distance cameras
- Digital magnifiers
- Large print or talking scientific calculators
- Embossers
- Tactile Diagram fusers
- Magnification software
- Screen reading software
- Braille Translation Software
- iPads with screens greater than 12" (usually for very large print users N48+ that require a personal device for all-day curriculum access)
- Touchscreen laptops/Microsoft tablets (usually for very large print users N48+ that require a personal device for all-day curriculum access)
- Belkin portable tablet stands