

**Policy last reviewed:** November 2024

**Agreed by:** Leadership and Management Team

**Frequency of review:** Biennially

**Date of next review:** November 2026

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### **Assistive Listening Technology 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 over 300 children and young people (CYP) aged 0-25 years with Assistive Listening Technology (ALT) (radio aids and other devices). 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 Resource Bases.

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

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

ALT is purchased by the Service and issued to individually named CYP. Currently, the majority of the equipment in use are Phonak systems

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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.

ALT consists of expensive pieces of equipment, often in excess of £1000. 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 and young people are not disadvantaged. There is a specific duty to provide *auxiliary aids* when needed. A radio aid is an example of an *auxiliary aid*.

Different arrangements exist for different ages and educational phases and on transition to adulthood. These arrangements are outlined below

### **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
- 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 child reaches statutory school age, the school will be required to sign an *Equipment Loan Form* (more detail below)
- For those with cochlear implants the decision and timing of the issuing of a radio aid will be determined in collaboration with the family and the Cochlear Implant Centre

### **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 *Equipment 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 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 extracurricular 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 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

### **Post-16 Education and Training**

At the age of 16, CYP will make a decision to stay in full time education in a school setting, a college or begin an apprenticeship or traineeship.

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.

Post-16 Colleges of Further Education arrangements are different. The College can support the CYP's access to learning by entering into an agreement to hire a radio aid or other Assistive Listening Device 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 and specialist visits by a qualified Teacher of the Deaf. The specialist 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 for one academic year.

Pathways - For young people who are not in a secondary school 6th form they may be:

1. In full time education at a college undertaking A levels, T levels, Technical and vocational qualifications, applied qualifications or undertaking exam retake.

***The BSCS will set up a contract with the educational setting to hire Assistive Listening Technology (ALT) for the young person,***

2. Combined work and study undertaking Traineeships, Internships, Apprenticeships, School leaver schemes  
*Access to Assistive Listening Technology (ALT):*

***The young person / employer will apply for ALT devices through Access to Work***

## **Independent Schools**

Independent schools are able to enter into an agreement to hire a radio aid (or other Assistive Listening Technology) 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 specialist 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 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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)*

*Good Practice Guide for Radio Aids*

<https://www.batod.org.uk/information-category/assistive-listening-technology-working-group/>