



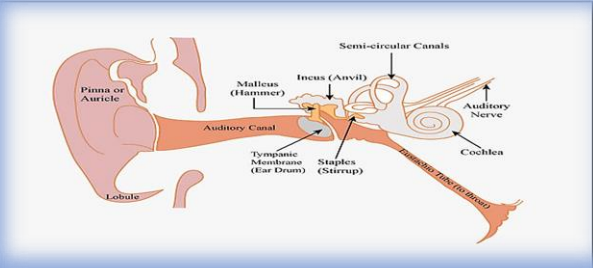
What is a hearing impairment? The World health organisation (2023) defines a hearing impairment as an inability to hear sounds, or any decrease in hearing. Hearing impairments can also be described as hard of hearing, being deaf or deafness. A hearing impairment can vary from a mild to a profound loss of hearing. Children will usually be declared as having a hearing impairment if their hearing level is greater than 30 decibels. A hearing impairment can be temporary or permanent depending on the cause of the impairment. It is stated by Welsh government (2017) that over 1.5 billion people worldwide live with a hearing impairment, with 45,000 of those being children in the UK.

What are the causes of hearing loss? The national deaf children’s society (2023) tells us that babies can be born deaf or lose their hearing as they become older. The cause of deafness cannot always be found, however, a high percentage of deafness in children is often caused by genetics. This can be the case even if there has not previously been any deafness identified in the family. Babies and children who have a hearing impairment due to genetics will often also have a “syndrome” meaning they will have additional conditions along with hearing loss. Chinwendu (2017) explains how deafness in babies can be caused by difficulties during pregnancy, due to infections carried by mum. Babies being born prematurely also increases the risks of a hearing impairment. Causes of deafness in babies can also be temporary, Most commonly caused by glue ear. Hearing impairments can also be developed in childhood. Children who contract illnesses such as mumps, meningitis or measles also have a high risk of developing a hearing impairment. Research suggests that hearing impairments in babies can also be linked to substance misuse during pregnancy.

How does hearing loss affect children and what barriers do children face? Hearing impairments in children can affect them in various ways. The speech, language and hearing association (2023) explain how children with a hearing impairment can struggle with pronunciation. The affects of a hearing impairment can also lead to self esteem issues and social exclusion. Children with a hearing impairment, whether temporary or permanent, can face many barriers in their educational learning. Weale (2019) explains how studies suggest that children with a hearing impairment are underperforming at school compared to their hearing peers. The main reason for these results leads to lack of funding and access to services for children with hearing impairment. One of the barriers children with hearing impairments face in education is their practitioner’s attitude towards their additional learning need. Ewing, Monsen and Kielblock (2017) research suggests that practitioners may have a negative attitude towards additional needs, due to lack of funding, training and understaffing. Children with hearing impairments also face barriers of cultural inclusion.

How are hearing impairments identified and diagnosed? The NHS (2021) states that new-born hearing screening is routine for babies in the UK. These early screening tests can detect any hearing issues early on and enables early intervention treatments. It is stated that between the ages of nine months to two and a half years old, babies hearing is to be monitored by caregivers. Caregivers will most likely be the first to notice any symptoms of hear loss in their babies. According to Cochlear (2023) Symptoms of hear loss in babies can be difficult to detect, however the signs are often apparent when a baby does not get startled by loud noises, they do not turn their heads to the source of a sound, nor do they smile or respond when they are being spoken to. When children become older symptoms of a hearing impairment can consists of poor communication skills, mispronouncing words and not responding when called. Hearing impairments can be identified in a number of ways, such as through visual reinforcement audiometry, play audiometry, bone conduction tests and tympanometry. According to The Centre for disease control and prevention (2022) early intervention is crucial to a child with a hearing impairment. With early intervention, there are a number of communication methods available for children with a hearing impairment, including technological aids, treatment plans and family support services.

What are the appropriate support strategies for children with a hearing impairment? One of the strategies used in education to support children with a hearing impairment is the loop system. A loop system is designed to send a wireless signal to a child’s hearing aid. According to the hearing loss association (2011) the loop system works by sending a wireless signal to a hearing aid, delivering sound directly to their ears. Madell (2015) states the loop system allows individuals to remain independent while communicating with others. The loop system blocks out background noises, focusing only on what is communicated through the microphone. The loop system is easily accessible and is also cost effective, allowing multiple uses to benefit from the system at once. According to Hain (2022) the barriers of the loop system include installation compatibility with older school buildings, picking up interference from other electronic devices and are also not compatible with smaller hearing aids.



Conclusion

In conclusion, as demonstrated in this webinar, a hearing impairment does not have an effect on a child’s intellectual abilities. A child with a hearing impairment has all the same potential as a hearing child. Any speech, language or social development delays can mostly be avoided with the assistance of early intervention methods. The importance of early identification, diagnosis and access to resources are crucial to a child’s learning outcomes.

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