

Supporting Deaf Children: Building a World of Inclusion

Deafness is a partial or complete inability to hear. It can range from mild hearing loss to total absence of hearing (profound deafness) in one or both ears (World Health Organisation, 2025).

How to identify and diagnose deafness in children and young people:

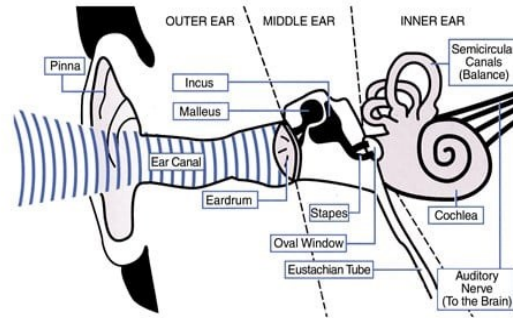
National Deaf Children's Society (2024b) state that it is crucial to test and identify deafness in babies by conducting a newborn screening which is a standard test given to newborn babies in the UK. Newborn hearing screening is a vital early diagnostic process designed to detect hearing impairments shortly after birth. It typically involves two tests: the Automated Otoacoustic Emission (AOAE) test and the Automated Auditory Brainstem Response (AABR) test.

According to the NHS (2024) the AOAE test is usually conducted first and involves placing a soft-tipped probe in the infant's ear to measure the cochlea's response to clicking sounds. A lack of clear response does not necessarily indicate permanent hearing loss and may result from temporary factors such as background noise, restlessness, or fluid in the ear.

Early identification through these screenings is crucial, as it enables timely intervention and support, which are essential for optimal speech, language, and cognitive development (Hearts for Hearing, 2025).

In this heartwarming YouTube video, a young girl experiences the life-changing moment of hearing her own voice for the first time after being fitted with a hearing aid. As the device is activated, her initial surprise quickly turns into joy and curiosity. Her wide-eyed reaction and emotional response beautifully capture the power of hearing technology in transforming the lives of deaf children. The video highlights both the emotional impact and the importance of early hearing intervention.

https://youtube.com/shorts/uaRqXnD2wKA?si=I3ASwdNci_69Lb4m



(National Deaf Children's Society, 2025)

Challenges and barriers that deaf children are faced with every day:

According to Deaf Child Worldwide (2021), deaf individuals encounter numerous barriers that hinder their full participation in society, many of which stem from a lack of awareness and systemic neglect.

A fundamental issue is the widespread lack of awareness regarding deafness and the various modes of communication available, such as sign language, lip-reading, and written communication (RNID, 2025).

This knowledge gap often results in uncertainty about how to interact appropriately with deaf individuals and where to access essential services, such as sign language interpretation (Cookey-Gam, 2025). Consequently, opportunities for meaningful engagement and inclusion are frequently missed (World Health Organisation, 2025).

An additional barrier to supporting young children with deafness is the limited access to language acquisition and assistive technologies suggests Deaf Child Worldwide (2021).

The majority of deaf children are born into hearing families, and without early identification and intervention, they may not be exposed to sign language during critical periods of cognitive and linguistic development (Terry and Rance, 2023).

Types of Hearing Loss and Impairments

According to Auditory Verbal UK (2014) sensorineural hearing loss refers to impairment originating in the inner ear, typically resulting from dysfunction of the cochlea, the auditory nerve, or the neural pathways connecting the two. This form of hearing loss is generally irreversible and permanent. However, conductive hearing loss occurs when sound transmission through the outer or middle ear to the inner ear is obstructed or inefficient (Cleveland Clinic, 2024).

Sensorineural hearing loss is a hearing loss in the inner ear.

Conductive deafness means that sound can't pass efficiently through the outer and middle ear into the inner ear.

Hearing aids and implants

Supporting deaf children through technological interventions such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and hearing assistance devices plays a critical role in promoting their communication and educational development (National Deaf Children's Society, 2025d).

Sign Language

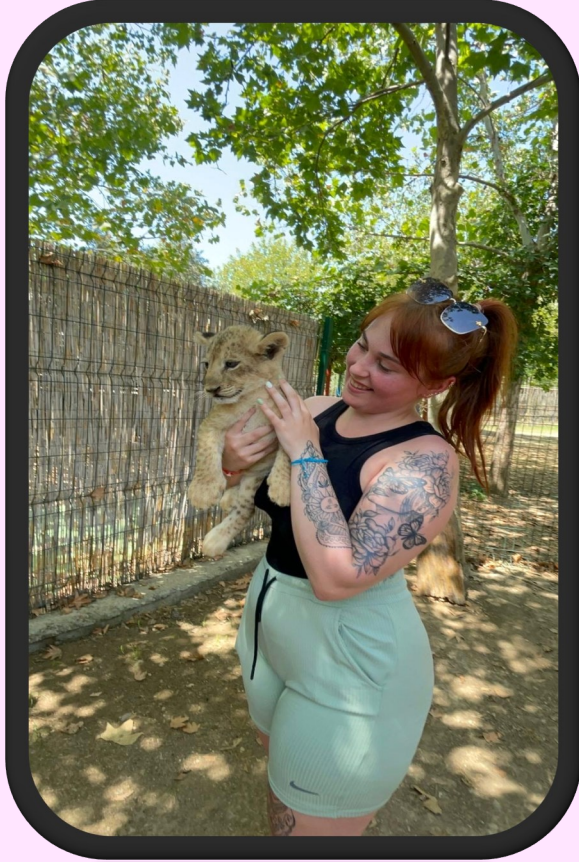
National Deaf Children's Society (2025c) state that sign language in the UK, specifically British Sign Language (BSL), is the primary language used by many deaf individuals within the British deaf community.

According to One Education (2024) BSL plays a critical role in supporting deaf children by providing them with accessible language from an early age, which is essential for cognitive, emotional, and social development. For deaf children, especially those born into hearing families, early exposure to BSL can help prevent language deprivation, promote healthy brain development, and enhance their ability to communicate effectively (National Deaf Children's Society, 2025c).

Furthermore, BSL enables deaf children to access education, build relationships, and participate fully in society. When used in educational settings alongside inclusive teaching practices, BSL can significantly improve learning outcomes and self-esteem for deaf pupils (Royal Association for Deaf people, No date).

The recognition of BSL as a legally recognized language in the UK achieved through the British Sign Language Act 2022 also underscores its importance and recognises the rights of deaf individuals, including children, to access services, education, and support in their preferred language (Legislation.gov, 2022).

Deafness and Hearing impairment Specialist



Key Skills and Expertise

- BSL Interpreter
- Sign Along Specialist
- Community Outreach Agent

Charis Brooks is a dedicated British Sign Language (BSL) and Sign-Along representative at the National Deaf Society, with a strong focus on early childhood communication. With 5 years of specialized expertise in identifying and diagnosing deafness in babies and young children, Charis plays a vital role in supporting families and professionals to create inclusive, communicative environments from the earliest stages of development. She works closely with specialist audiologists to ensure accurate assessments and timely interventions. Her work bridges clinical insight with compassionate advocacy, ensuring that every child receives the support they need to thrive.