

Hearing Impairment !

Challenges for Hearing impaired children.

Agrawal et-al (2025) discusses how important hearing is in relation to language development, however, highlights how children with a hearing impairment are more at risk of developing language de-lays due to not being able to hear early stages of speech and language. Awan et-al (2024) emphasis the impact language delay has not just on speech, however how it can also affect a child academically, socially and emotionally. Awan et-al (2024) continues to explain how children with a hearing impairment find social situations challenging, due to difficulties in communicating, which can leave them feeling isolated or frustrated, to which Awan et-al (2024) states can lead to behavioral issues.

However, with interventions from hearing aids and Cochlear Implants Parola et-al (2024), studies have shown to have made some improvements to children's language and communications, through the devices helping to enhance auditory signals. These medical interventions are known as medical models of disability, which refer to medical professional's attempts to "cure" the impairments through medical interventions (Care learning, 2024 and Disability Wales, no-date,p4).

Another challenge children with hearing impairments are currently facing is having to adapt to mainstream education due to the closures of specialist deaf schools across the UK according to Gilbert (2024) report. Gilbert (2024) report states how 95% of teachers believe the lack of resources and budgets will have "detrimental" effects on hearing impaired children accessing learning. Although teachers of the deaf currently visits individuals within mainstream schools, each teacher is assigned between 40 to 60 children placing pressure on the support able to be given according to Berry (2017, p132). While Gilbert (2024) and Berry (2017) states the rest of the time the children are put into mainstream lessons to encourage independence, with possible support from a teaching assistance who has little training or experience on how to support children with hearing impairments. These environmental challenges to hearing impaired children are known as the social model of disability, to where the environment creates barriers to daily life (Disability Wales, no-date, p6).

What is a hearing impairment?

Hearing impairment also known as hearing loss or deafness, it is a condition which affects approximately 50,000 children within the United Kingdom according to the NHS (2026) and National Sensory Impairment Partnership, (NatSIP, 2026).

According to World Health Organization (hereafter WHO, 2026) hearing impairment is when an individual is unable to hear as efficiently as everyone else, this can range from mild to profound hearing loss. Although 90% of children born deaf have hearing parents (NHS, 2026 AND Walker, 2025), research by Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2025) states hearing loss is linked to family genetics or a medical syndrome.

There are two main classifications of hearing impairment, Sensorineural occurs through damage to the nerves or the cochlea within the ear, resulting in permanent hearing loss. Another is Conductive which is a result of a blockage within the ear by ear wax or glue ear, these can resolve naturally or with minor assistance, however only resulting in temporary hearing loss (NHS,2026 and Walker, 2025).

Diagnosis:

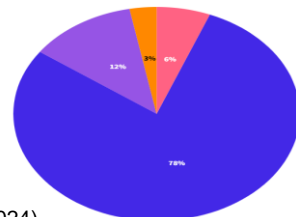
Diagnosis for hearing impairment is undertaken through a series of assessments by healthcare professionals, which vary depending on the age of the child according to Walker (2025) and the NHS (2026). Newborn babies are usually given a hearing screening known as Automated Otoacoustic Emission or Automated Auditory Brainstem Response whilst in hospital or offered within the first few weeks after birth (NHS,2024 and CDC, 2024). These assessments involve a clicking sound placed in the baby's ear to initiate a response from the cochlea nerves (NHS, 2024 and DCD, 2024). Another hearing assessment used primarily on children is the Visual Reinforcement Audiometry, involving children responding to sounds and interactions through playing (Walker, 2025). During these assessments if the required responses are not visible, referrals are then made for further examinations with an audiologist who can then diagnose and measure the level of deafness to provide the required support (Gov UK, 2025).

Although an initial indication of hearing loss is given through these initial assessments, the results are not always accurate according to NHS (2024) and Walker (2025). Walker (2025) and the NHS (2024) discuss how early assessments on babies may not provide accurate results as some still have fluid from birth within the eardrums, alongside both babies and children's being unsettled during the procedure or distracted by surroundings or background noise, all affecting the accuracy of responses.

While these assessments may not be accurate or initially pick up hearing loss, parents are given checklists or developmental books which demonstrates the average developmental stages children experience at certain ages (NHS, 2024). Some indicators of possible hearing loss could be the lack of response to loud sudden noises, speech delays, lack of babbling or acknowledgement when called or spoken too (NHS, 2026). All these signs could be a result of a hearing impairment and with diagnosis, interventions such as hearing aids or cochlear implants can be offered (NHS, 2026).

Distribution of deaf children in UK schools

■ Mainstream schools without Integrated Units
■ Specialist schools (not specifically for the deaf)
■ Mainstream schools with Integrated Units
■ Specialist schools for deaf children



Gilbert (2024)

Volume

26-40dB 41-60dB 61-80dB more than 81 dB

Severity



Different degrees of hearing loss

(Iqwig, 2025)

Strategies to support hearing impairment:

Wales in 2023 was the first place within the UK to include British Sign Language (hereafter BSL) alongside Welsh and English into the curriculum (Welsh Government, 2023). BSL is a language which comprises of facial expressions and hand actions, referred to as a visual language according to Royal Association for deaf people, (no-date). In collaboration with BSL experts and the Deaf community the Welsh Government created resources on the HWB platform to support implementation within schools (Welsh Government, 2023). Park (2025) states BSL supports both hearing and hearing-impaired children's, language and social development, while also creating classrooms which promote inclusion, through providing more opportunities to communicate and express themselves. This is a commitment the UK government are investing in through "embedding equity" and inclusive settings, which provide all children the same opportunities (GOV.UK, no-date). Park (2025) further discusses how BSL supports faster speech skills, especially for those who sign alongside speaking, as it allows children to link words with actions, which enhances listening skills alongside concentration skills. Although integrating BSL into classrooms can be challenging, due to lack of funding, resulting in a shortage of BSL teachers and training opportunities (ASB-archive, 2025). While some schools do not place BSL in the same priority as other subjects lowering the chances of implementation (ASB-archives,2025).

Conclusion:

In relation to the information and research shown, it is evident to see the impact hearing impairment can have on children's personal and educational development. However, through developing knowledge and awareness of the early signs of hearing loss and implementing positive interventions like BSL, the barriers children with a hearing impairment face daily are fewer, creating more opportunities to reach their full potential. Through incorporating BSL within daily routines, settings are providing more opportunities for all children to communicate and express themselves, which together promotes academic, emotional and behavioural development.

Furthermore, creating environments which encourage equity and inclusion.