Radio aids in deaf children’s lives – holistic education

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**Introduction**

During term time children spend just 30% of their waking week at school. The other 70% of their waking week and holidays can provide valuable opportunities for listening and learning. It is our assertion that this 70% is equally important for social, emotional and language development but can often be hard for deaf children to access.

**Quality standards**

The Quality Standards for the Use of Personal Radio Aids recommend that radio aids should form part of a deaf child's personal amplification package.

**Methods**

We issued radio aids to 25 deaf children who wore hearing aids to use in their daily lives and asked families to tell us about their experiences.

**Results**

*Where were radio aids used?*

We used the radio aid when there was a lot of background noise like at the supermarkets, in the car or just generally out and about.

We used it on car journeys over 5 minutes or if we are somewhere noisy. If he is at a group we give it to the leader to wear so he can follow the activities better.

We used it in busy/noisy environments, generally out of the home such as restaurants, shopping centres, children’s parties etc.

**Results**

*What did families notice?*

- Big difference in her ability to concentrate and take part in group time.
- Safety aspects much improved as daddy could tell her to be careful etc and go and find her brother.
- He was more chatty in the car.
- Teacher [at ballet class] remarked that E is really concentrating on what she is saying – a big improvement.
- Amazing! Able to talk to her whilst driving without turning round. Went for walk and she chatted away. Cooking and talking over oven noise.
- Put in middle of table – more talking than normal from her.

**Conclusions**

Deaf children and their families reported on the situations where they found that a radio aid gave them greater opportunity to engage in all aspects of life, including family, nursery and after school activities. Parents and activity leaders were more confident when interacting with them in challenging listening situations. This in turn facilitated more natural speech and language interactions and development, mimicking more closely the holistic learning experiences of normally hearing children.

The effective use of equipment is greatly assisted by providing an efficient set-up of the system, having support from, and troubleshooting by professionals, and facilitating peer support from other families.