# Supporting the Achievement of Children and Young People with Sensory Needs in East Dunbartonshire

Policy and Guidance

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## 1. Introduction and rationale

East Dunbartonshire Council is committed to supporting the achievements of children and young people with sensory needs, ensuring everyone reaches their full learning potential.

# 1.1 What are 'Sensory Needs'?

'Sensory needs' or 'sensory loss' are umbrella terms used to describe loss of the distance senses, for example, of sight and hearing. 'Sensory needs' is commonly used by professionals rather than people with 'sensory needs' themselves.

People with sensory needs will have experienced life with their individual impairment in a completely different way to others with the same type of sensory needs – no two people will be the same and services should not be delivered as if they were.

As our population ages, alongside children and young people exposing themselves to excessive noise, sensory needs is affecting a growing number of people. People with sensory needs often have difficulty communicating with family, friends, colleagues and service providers, which can impact significantly on their health and wellbeing.

Within our communities, you will sometimes encounter people who have sensory needs whether it is children, colleagues or service users. It is important to provide an accessible workplace or service to everyone. It is also a legal requirement (this will be covered later in this policy). Understanding some of the barriers and issues that people who have sensory needs frequently encounter can help all of us to provide more inclusive services.

# 1.2 Types of Sensory Needs

There are four types of sensory needs, explained in more detail below:

#### 1 Deaf



- People born with a mild, moderate, severe or profound hearing loss.
- Deaf people who were born with hearing and have become severely or profoundly deaf after learning speech.

# 2 Sight Impaired/Severely Sight Impaired



- There are various terminologies used to describe sight impairment, including visually impaired, partially sighted and blind.
- Sight impairment can refer to clarity of vision, field of vision, eye movement disorders and difficulties with processing of vision information. An individual can have one or more of these impacting their vision to be considered sight impaired.
- According to the Visual Impairment Network for Children and Young People (VINCYP), there are two severity categories: sight impaired and severely sight impaired.

# 3 Deafblind/Dual Sensory Needs



- People who have a severe degree of hearing loss and sight impairment
- Some people may be deafblind from birth, others may be born deaf or hard of hearing and become blind or visually impaired later in life, or the reverse may be the case. This will have a direct impact on the method of communication preferred.

# 4 Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) user



- People with severe or profound hearing loss, who use BSL to communicate, English, in most cases, is not likely their first language
- The Deaf BSL User may have difficulty with reading and understanding English whether spoken or written.

# 1.3 Legislation

UK and Scottish legislation is in place to protect and promote the rights of people with sensory needs.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Under this legislation it is illegal to treat a person with a disability, or perceived disability, less favourably than someone without a disability, to harass or victimise them because of their disability or something connected to their disability.

It is also illegal to fail to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that people with a disability are not at a 'substantial disadvantage' when accessing goods, services, housing, employment and education.

The Equality Act 2010 gives rights to disabled people with assistance dogs also. It is no longer legal to display "Guide Dogs Only" and these should be replaced with "Assistance Dogs Only". It is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 to refuse access or services to disabled people with assistance dogs of any type. This includes taxis, private hire taxis, shops, banks, cafes, restaurants, pubs, libraries, hospitals etc.

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 aims to promote the use and understanding of British Sign Language (BSL), principally by means of BSL plans, which are to be published by Scottish Government Ministers and specified public authorities. These plans are to be reviewed and updated at regular intervals and reported on via progress reports.

All Councils and NHS Boards will be listed public authorities who must produce their own plan, as well as other public bodies (covered later in this policy).

#### 1.4 Rationale

Research shows that appropriate and timely intervention in the early years, following diagnosis, and for as long as is required thereafter, has the biggest positive impact on the lives of young children and helps them to achieve in life. This 2024 policy and guidance update places a strong focus on supporting children, young people, and their families, building capacity in our early years centres and schools and working collaboratively with partners.

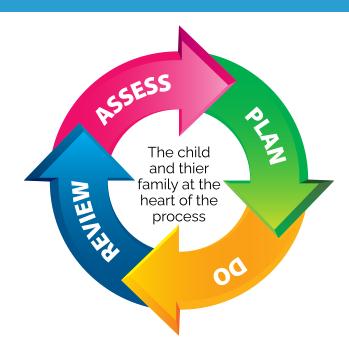
This guidance is set within the national context and is designed to support education staff who work with children and young people with sensory needs, so that the impairment is not a barrier to their development, and they can reach their full learning potential.

#### The guidance will help education staff to:

- Understand the needs of children and young people with sensory needs
- Make reasonable adaptations to learning environments to better meet the needs of children and young people with sensory needs, ensuring the necessary support and learning strategies are in place so that the curriculum is fully accessible
- Understand and use technology which supports pupils with sensory needs
- Enable children and young people to feel fully included in all areas of their early years and school life
- Know where to access advice, support and resources.

# 2. Overview and planning cycle

In-line with national guidance, East Dunbartonshire Council has adopted the cyclical model of practice involving assessment, planning, implementation (do) and review (see below). This ensures that the planning framework at establishment and individual child level meets the needs of all learners, including children with sensory needs.



## 2.1 Effective provision for a child or young person with sensory needs

Sensory needs is not a learning disability and, given the right support, children and young people with sensory needs can make the same progress and attain as well as peers of similar ability. Having high expectations of all children is vital in ensuring that they achieve in-line with their peers of a similar age and stage.

#### Effective provision for a child or young person with sensory needs may include:

- A thorough assessment of the child's strengths and needs
- A plan setting out how the early years centre/school will assess and better understand individual needs and make reasonable adjustments to meet those needs and overcome any barriers to the child or young person
- Effective implementation of the plan by collegiate working between the team around the child or young person
- Regular reviews of the child's progress and next steps of the plan.

#### An effective early years centre/school should:

- Seek the child/young person's and parents' views on the barriers they are experiencing and the strategies and support that will benefit them
- Ensure that the assessment of a child/young person's needs is based on accurate information about their prior attainment (this should reflect the type and level of their sensory needs and its effect on their learning, identifying key barriers to making progress).
- Consider the implications of a child/young person's sensory needs when planning how to meet their needs
- Ensure that the necessary support is provided, whether this be through modification
  of teaching strategies, effective use of technology, staff training, adapting the learning
  environment and providing for social and wellbeing needs
- Review the effectiveness of their provision for children and young people with sensory needs -.monitoring the extent to which the child or young person is achieving their expected outcomes and making necessary changes if required.

#### 2.2 Assessment

#### Assessing the appropriate support for a child or young person

Comprehensive assessment will enable the early years centre/school to identify potential barriers to progress and the support that is needed to overcome these. An accurate and thorough understanding of a child/young person's strengths and needs underpins good planning and progress.

#### A good assessment may include:

- The child/young person's self-evaluation of any support requirements
- The views of parents about appropriate support
- Information from the early years centre/school including assessment information on levels of attainment
- The involvement of specialist assessment undertaken by sensory teachers and other specialist staff
- The need for access to appropriate technology and communication support
- Consideration of support needed to meet any specific subject requirements.

#### 2.3 Plan

#### Planning the right support

Plans should be developed in consultation with the Team Around the Child (TAC) which will include relevant professionals, parents and child/young person's views and should consider:

- The outcomes the child or young person is expected to achieve at various stages in their learning and at key transition stages (home to early years centre, early years centre to primary, primary to secondary, secondary to post-school)
- The shorter-term targets to support achievement of those outcomes
- The provision and adjustments required to achieve positive outcomes and targets, meeting needs, and overcoming barriers to accessing teaching and learning. This may include support strategies and interventions, access arrangements and support from external agencies
- Consideration should be given for the need of a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP), and reasons given if this is not required.



#### 2.4 Implementation

#### Implementing support

A child's plan should set out who is responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of an action plan. This would usually be the Centre Manager/ASN Coordinator or Pupil Support Coordinator as part of the TAC.

#### The plan coordinator's role may include the following:

- Ensuring all staff involved in teaching and supporting the child or young person receive the necessary information, advice, guidance, and training to ensure the child or young person is fully supported and can access learning and teaching
- Ensuring the individual child or young person's progress is monitored
- Capturing the voice and views of the child or young person on what is going well and not so well
- Ensuring that appropriate support and provision is in place (for example, technology, adjustments/adaptations to the learning environment)
- Ensuring all staff implement interventions and strategies agreed as part of the support
- Ensuring that all necessary modifications and adaptations are in place so that the child has equal access to all assessments.

#### 2.5 Review

#### Ongoing review of impact of support

The effectiveness of the support and its impact on the child/young person's progress should be regularly reviewed and evaluated, considering the views of the child or young person and parents. The early years centre/school should develop systems and processes for doing this.

# Key areas related to the child/young person's sensory needs that may require consideration include the following:

- Levels of progress across curricular areas, identifying the child or young person's strengths and building upon them
- Levels of overall progress according to respective age and stage of child or young person
- The accessibility of the subject content
- The effectiveness of technology
- Any changes to the child/young person's level of hearing or vision
- Success in communicating with others, socialising and forming friendships.

Where the child or young person is not making the expected levels of progress, specialist assessments may be helpful in identifying the source of difficulties and revising the plan and support strategies. These will be provided by the Sensory Service.

More widely, early years centres/schools should take steps to review the general effectiveness of provision for children with sensory needs. This may include, for example, the learning environment and whether staff would benefit from additional training and support.

Staff may wish to discuss this with the senior leadership team, link educational psychologist or CIRCLE Advisor. The central ASN team can support when required too.

# 3. Roles and responsibilities

The following section provides examples of individuals who would be involved as part of the team around the child and what their roles and responsibilities would be.

# 3.1 Child or young person

In-line with national guidance, it is important to involve the child or young person in any discussion of the type of support they receive. For younger children, the teacher may need to rely on observing their responses to the support they receive, and the interventions put in place to support their learning. Older children and young people should be encouraged to give their own feedback.

As part of the early years centre/school's quality assurance process, children and young people with sensory needs will be involved in the planning of their learning and development. This will focus on their views of barriers to learning, and what supports them to overcome these. It will also include their preferred learning environment, use of technology and teaching approaches.

#### 3.2 Parents/carers

Parents are key partners in planning for their child's education. They can provide useful information about their child's needs and development and how they can be supported at home. They should be able to pass on details of reports and advice on their child from health and education specialists. Parents are also able to feedback on how their child is responding to the supports in early years centre/school.

## 3.3 Centre Manager/ASN Coordinator/Pupil Support Coordinator

In-line with East Dunbartonshire Council's 'Including Every Learner' policy the Centre Manager/ASN Coordinator or Pupil Support Coordinator will lead the team around the child to:

- Identify learning objectives in planning support to meet the needs of the child or young person
- Provide advice and support to teachers and practitioners as required
- Ensure protected liaison time for sensory teachers to liaise with teachers and practitioners
- Identify and review staff training and development needs.

# 3.4 Teachers and practitioners

The teacher or practitioner is responsible

- Ensuring the physical environment and learning and teaching context meet the needs of the child with sensory needs
- Participating in professional learning opportunities to enable them to meet the needs of learners with sensory needs
- Identifying and raising any concern or issue in relation to the child/young person's progress and development with the Centre Manager/ASN Coordinator or Pupil Support Coordinator.

# 3.5 Support for Learning Assistant (SLA) and Early Years Support Workers

The SLA or Early Years Support Worker will support implementation of the child/young person's support plan as directed by the teacher/practitioner.



# 3.6 Sensory Service

As part of the team around the child, the Sensory Service (Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People and Teachers of the Visually Impaired) can provide a range of support, which may include:

- Working directly with children this would include pre and post tutoring, direct individual, and small group teaching, working with small groups, supporting mainstream lessons
- **Specialist assessments and interpretation of results** this would include visual, audiology, language, and other national assessments.
- **Provision of advice** this would include consulting with teaching and non-teaching staff about the learner's needs in relation to their sensory needs and strategies to support those needs and to build capacity within their schools
- Partnership working meeting with learners, their parents and the staff involved, including
  those from other agencies, to plan, record and evaluate additional support needs arising
  from the sensory needs. Contribute to professional learning opportunities for teaching and
  non-teaching staff at school and service level.
- Working with learners and families this would include supporting learners with sensory needs and their families, from early years to school leaving age and through periods of transition
- Professional learning keeping up to date with legislation, guidance relating to additional support for learning, technology visual and audiology developments. Develop and maintain skills and understanding of the curriculum. Develop and maintain the specific competences related to teachers working wholly or mainly with children with sensory needs.



# 3.7 Other professionals

Other professionals may contribute to the development of the child/young person's support planning process as part of the team around the child.

#### Effective multidisciplinary working to support the child should include:

- Providing information to other professionals supporting the child on their progress, for example, informing the Educational Audiologist or Assistive Technology Teacher about how well the environment and technology is working for the child or young person
- Ensuring all relevant staff have, as far as possible, the time for necessary liaison with parents and other professionals who support the child or young person
- Contributing to multidisciplinary assessments and any resulting plan.

#### 3.8 Central ASN Team

The Central ASN Team is made up of Inclusion Support Officers, Quality Improvement Officers, and a Quality Improvement Manager.

#### The team can:

- Provide support and advice to the team around the child as required
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of the Sensory Service through consultation with stakeholders including parents, children/young people, staff, and other partners.

# 3.9 Staff training and professional learning

At authority level, the ASN training calendar can provide professional learning opportunities for all education staff. Training will be designed to support assessment, planning, implementation and review for children and young people with additional support needs, including sensory needs.

As part of the Professional Review and Development (PRD) process the Sensory Service will be supported in engaging in continuous professional learning through a range of learning experiences. This may include attendance at national events/conferences and visits to specialist establishments in other local authorities.

The Sensory Service will build capacity with all education staff involved in supporting children and young people with sensory needs. Capacity building will be at whole early years centre/school level and additional specialist training will be delivered for those who have a child with sensory needs in their class.

# 4. Supporting transition

Transitions can be daunting for any child or young person. For those with sensory needs there are extra challenges that may be encountered, including:

- New environments with varying learning experiences
- New staff to engage and work with
- Varying levels of staff and peer awareness of sensory needs
- More demanding subject content
- Frequent changes of environment (especially within a secondary context) with varying quality in acoustics and orientation
- Frequent changes of staff, with varying teaching styles and expectations
- A lot of new vocabulary, particularly specialist subject vocabulary
- Making new friendships with changing social boundaries and expectations (including social media)
- Differing expectations of behaviour and independence.

It is important that the team around the child develops a transition plan that helps overcome these potential challenges and ensures a successful transition.

#### A good transition plan should:

- Be prepared no later than six months in advance of the child or young person starting, to give time
  for the support arrangements to be put in place
- Clearly identify the member of staff responsible for preparing the plan and coordinating its implementation
- Offer support for parents, outlining the importance of the parental role
- Capture the views of the child or young person and that of the parents
- Be based on a thorough analysis of the child/young person's needs and strengths including information from specialist assessments where necessary
- Set out what will be done to meet the child/young person's needs including:
  - >> what should be provided
  - >> who in the early years centre/school is responsible for each identified action
  - » timescale for delivery.

#### An effective early years centre/school should:

- Recognise the additional challenges that children and young people with sensory needs may
  face in transitioning from home to early years centre, from early years to primary, from primary to
  secondary and from secondary to post school
- Make sure it has received all necessary information well in advance of the transition
- Develop a transition plan that identifies a lead member of staff responsible for ensuring that the move is successful for the child
- Ensure that the transition plan sets out what support needs are to be provided to meet the child/ young person's needs and that it is put in place (this includes ensuring that any necessary training is provided)
- Distribute relevant information on the child to all relevant staff.

# 5. Supporting social development and wellbeing

Children and young people with sensory needs can face barriers to feeling that they are fully included socially because of their sensory needs. Feeling included and a valued member of the group can improve a child/young person's self-esteem, confidence, and emotional wellbeing. Early years centres/schools have responsibility to proactively support the social development and wellbeing of children with sensory needs.

#### An effective early years centre/school should:

- Consult with parents/carers continuously
- Promote the social development and wellbeing of children and young people with sensory needs
- Provide children and young people with sensory needs the opportunity to meet and socialise with other children and young people with similar sensory needs
- Support children and young people with sensory needs to be independent, feel positive about their sensory needs and identify what support they require
- Organise peer awareness training to help other children and young people understand the needs of the child/young person with sensory needs
- Ensure their anti-bullying policy considers the specific needs of children and young people with sensory needs and take proactive steps to prevent bullying.



# Good practice in supporting social development and wellbeing

Awareness training for other children is helpful, enabling their peer group to understand the difficulties that children with sensory needs face and what they can do to help and make them feel included. With younger children this can be done through adults modelling helpful behaviours, while older children can support each other in awareness sharing of the difficulties faced (additional skills, perspective) and how they can help.

When supporting social inclusion, it is important to maintain the balance between providing support and ensuring that the child does not become over-dependent on the adult for support.

The child themselves can be helped to develop strategies for initiating and maintaining social interaction, such as promoting listening and talking skills. All children will benefit from reminders about good social interaction skills.

Children's confidence can be boosted by age and context appropriate praise which is most effective when it is specific and descriptive.

Children with sensory needs will benefit from the same opportunities to take part in activities outside early years centre/school as their peers. For example, after school clubs run by external agencies should make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of children with sensory needs to ensure that they are able to participate fully. Children with sensory needs may need support and encouragement to join in these activities and about the support they will receive to enable them to take part.

Children with sensory needs should be supported to develop a positive self-image which will help them to deal with situations which may be more demanding.

#### All staff can help children to develop a positive self-image by:

- Celebrating strengths and achievements and empowering children and young people to recognise their strengths
- Discussing with all children that everyone needs support from time to time and with the sensory impaired child, that they are not the only one to need support
- Supporting children and young people to develop strategies that will help them cope in the unpredictable world outside early years centre/school, particularly in relation to their sensory needs
- Ensuring that all resources (visual aids, stories) reflect the diversity in the community and include those with sensory needs
- Where possible, providing opportunities to meet other children and young people with sensory needs within East Dunbartonshire and in partnership with local and national partners.

If further support is required, the Sensory Teacher can be consulted to consider further support for the child.

# Planned social inclusion with sensory needs peer group

To build self-confidence, resilience and promote emotional wellbeing, children with sensory needs will benefit from planned opportunities to meet up and interact with their sensory impaired peer group. Families of children and young people with sensory needs will also benefit from these opportunities, which will be through a range of activities such as sporting/musical events. The Sensory Team will facilitate such opportunities each year.

# 6. Working together - partnership with parents and carers

Parents, as part of the team around the child, have a vital role in supporting their child's learning through sharing knowledge of their child's strengths and needs, contributing to the support planning process and supporting progress through working with their child at home. Parents have a unique contribution as those who know their child best and are key partners in planning for their child.

#### An effective early years centre/school should:

- Work closely with parents to ensure a better understanding of the child's needs
- Actively involve parents as part of the team around the child to meet the needs of the individual learner
- Communicate with parents about their child's progress and any barriers in order that these can be overcome.

# Contact prior to starting early years centre/school

Discussion with parents prior to the child/young person's admission to the early years centre/school will enable staff to gather important information about the child/young person's needs so that provision can be put in place to ensure a successful start. It provides an opportunity to respond to any worries parents may have about their child's transition, helping them to feel valued, welcomed and involved in their child's education. Family involvement is central to ensuring the child or young person has a positive transition into the setting. Opportunity to share key information about their child, ask questions and to build positive relationships with the team who will be working/ supporting their child's care and learning journey is fundamental to supporting achievement.

# Helping parents support their child's learning

#### All staff can help parents support their child's learning by:

- Promoting shared strategies that provide consistency for the child/young person
- Sharing challenges their child may face and suggesting ways of responding to these
- Providing details on the topics their child will be following and how they might help at home to support their learning in an engaging way.

Parents are often keen to provide additional practice in specific aspects of their child's language and communication, literacy, or numeracy skills. They can also reinforce the learning of new concepts and vocabulary.

It is important to keep in contact with parents to monitor this additional support to ensure it is enjoyable and stress free for the child/young person and their family. It should not be excessively demanding, as all children and young people need time to relax and engage in extracurricular activities.



# Keeping parents informed

Parents value receiving regular, up-to-date, and accessible information about:

- Their child's progress against set targets and measures being taken to address any difficulties the child may be experiencing
- Their child's participation in the life of the early years centre/school, including the development of social skills and friendships.

It is important to plan with parents when and how they can expect to receive this information and the frequency with which they will receive it.

# Establishing good communication between home and learning environment

Communicating everyday information between early years centre/school and home can be hard for children and young people with sensory needs who may misunderstand information or instructions or find it difficult to make a note of work to be carried out at home.

To help, the early years centre/school can:

- Support the use of shared planning to provide an important link between teachers and parents
- Establish a regular way for staff to update parents by emailing, meeting, or phoning.

It is important to be proactive in establishing a good communication system that works well as it can avoid additional stress in preparing for early years centre/school and help to reinforce key concepts learned. Effective communication arrangements can support transitions and help to support the child or young person with sensory needs to have a positive experience of learning in different contexts. It can also empower older children and young people to be involved in communication and increase their self-efficacy.

# 7. Early intervention

Providing up-to-date and accurate advice and support for families with babies or very young children with sensory needs is very important. Support and guidance at this time can help families to feel more confident with their baby or very young child and can support them in accessing the right support.

#### Effective early support for families can:

- Support development of interactions within the family that will help the baby/very young child to be best supported at the earliest opportunity
- Help families to feel more confident in playing and interacting with their baby
- Provide advice about supports available for the family
- Signpost next steps in relation to learning
- Be a source of support when the parent needs someone to talk to.

The Sensory Service will work with families of babies and very young children flexibly to provide support and advice as set out above.

# 8. British Sign Language (BSL) and Braille

#### **BSL**

The East Dunbartonshire BSL Plan will be in place from 2024 until 2030. It shares the same priority areas with the BSL National Plan and aligns where possible with the same values and priorities. This plan contains a range of actions we will take to make the goals happen and measurable by yearly monitoring.

East Dunbartonshire Council will proactively extend an offer of our BSL services to our employees and the public. This proactive approach ensures that sign language service availability is clearly communicated to all users, actively encouraging their utilisation. This approach will support confidence among BSL users, assuring them that their preference will be accommodated.

The primary objective of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 is to foster the sustainability and growth of BSL and its associated culture. East Dunbartonshire Council will endeavour to normalise opportunities for the public and our staff to use BSL, aligning with the objectives outlined in the National British Language Plan.

The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and East Dunbartonshire Council mirror the same aims. These are:

- Show our commitment to protecting and supporting BSL including in its tactile form for those with sight loss
- Recognise and value BSL as a language in its own right
- Ensure the needs of Deaf and Deafblind BSL users are brought into the heart of our organisations by inclusive approaches.

#### Braille and audio

At any point in time individuals can request that a document is provided in Braille or in audio format. This includes school information such as textbooks, information leaflets in large print, audio format or braille. As with all translations, requests should be made by contacting Customer Services on 0300 123 4510 and asking for the Communications & Engagement Team who will co-ordinate the translation or transcription with the appropriate service and approved provider.

# 9. Resources

www.british-sign.co.uk
www.callscotland.org.uk
www.clearvisionproject.org
www.nhsaaa.net/services/services-a-z/cochlear- the-scottish-cochlear-implant-programme
www.deafaction.org
www.enquire.org.uk
www.guidedogs.org.uk
https://livingpaintings.org
www.makaton.org
www.ndcs.org.uk
www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/health-and-wellbeing-services/10458%201inv1116
www.nn.nhs.scot/hincyp
www.vincyp.scot.nhs.uk
www.natsip.org.uk
www.rnid.org.uk/about-us/rnid-in-scotland
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www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk
www.sightscotland.org.uk
www.talkingmats.com
www.visibilityscotland.org.uk
www.wsdcs.org.uk

#### Other formats

This document can be provided in large print. Braille or in audio format and can be translated into other community languages.

Please contact the Council on 0300 123 4510