



Communication and Me

A guide for Parents
of Babies with a
Hearing Loss



*To avoid confusion throughout this leaflet we use "she" to talk about your baby. We also use "hearing loss" for any type of hearing difficulty.

COMMUNICATION AND ME: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF BABIES WITH A HEARING LOSS

As a parent or main carer, you are the most important person in your baby's life.

Babies and their parents begin to communicate from birth. It takes many months before a baby begins to use words or signs but communication starts well before this.

Communication isn't just about talking or signing. Babies naturally want to communicate with other people and do this in lots of ways for example; by giggling, kicking their arms and legs or crying. Babies love to look at people's faces. They enjoy it when you notice what they are doing and when you respond to them, for example when you tickle your baby and she laughs, this means she loves what you are doing and would like you to do it again.

This is the start of communication and is the same for both deaf and hearing babies.

For most babies, learning language seems to just happen naturally, but in fact parents have a very important role to play. It's the same for a child with a hearing loss. It may take more time and the way you communicate may be different, but most children with a hearing loss learn to communicate effectively with other people and many do this using speech.

TOP TIPS!

Many parents worry that what they are doing is the right thing for a baby who has a hearing loss. Your role is very important, but it doesn't involve anything difficult or complex. Here are some ideas to help and reassure you:

- Ⓜ **Talk to your baby** from the start even if you are not sure how much she can hear you; you will still be helping her learn.
- Ⓜ **Try some signs if you can.** If you can use a sign or gesture at the same time, that's great, but don't let any worries you have about your signing get in the way of simple communication and fun with your baby. The more relaxed you are and the more you take time to communicate with your baby, the more you are helping her learn.
- Ⓜ **Put your baby's hearing aids in** as often as possible even if she doesn't seem to respond. Follow the advice of your Audiologist and Teacher of the Deaf.
- Ⓜ **Have fun making noises together;** clapping, banging pans with a wooden spoon, turning music on and off. Draw her attention to sounds, like a big lorry going past or a knock at the door.
- Ⓜ **Quiet time.** Try to make some quiet time to play with your baby. Turn off the TV or radio so she can concentrate on the sounds you make together.
- Ⓜ **Peek-a-boo!** Babies love to interact with other people, so physical games like tickling, bouncing or playing peek-a-boo are all good fun.
- Ⓜ **Look at your baby when you talk.** Get down to her level so she can see your face. Make the most of times when she is in her highchair, car seat, during a nappy change or in the bath to play.
- Ⓜ **Talk about what she is doing or looking at.** It's great to use lots of facial expression and gestures, a sing-song voice, simple words and short sentences.
- Ⓜ **Talk about what you are doing** and the things you see when you are out and about.
- Ⓜ **Copy the sounds that she makes** and answer her as if she is talking to you. Babies love it when you copy the sounds they make—even sneezes, hiccups and raspberries!

MORE TOP TIPS!

- ② **Repeat, repeat, repeat!** Repetition is a great way to help her learn language. Repetition makes words and phrases familiar and easier to remember.
 - Use the same words and phrases in everyday routines, "Bath time, clothes off!", "Daddy's home!" "Want your milk?"
 - Share favourite books again and again.
 - Watch the same favourite DVD or video over and over again together.
 - Simple sounds are easy to include in daily routines, eg, "mmm" at meal times, "pooh!" during a nappy change, "uh-oh!" when something falls over or is messy; "splash!" at bath time; Other sounds could be "Sh!", "Wheel!", "Brrm" "Beep beep" "Atishoo!"

- ② **Share books together.** Even young babies like to share books with you sat on your knee or so she can see your face and the book. Don't worry about reading the words, just talk about the pictures. Nottingham Bookstart has lots of good ideas and free books, some for deaf babies! Ask your Health Visitor or Teacher of the Deaf.

- ② **Have fun with songs and rhymes.** It doesn't matter what your voice is like!
 - Action and Nursery rhymes, for example 'Wind the bobbin up' 'Row, row, row your boat', "Round and round the garden"
 - Make up your own songs using familiar tunes and words, for example, using your child's name or what you are doing, "Sophie's in the bath" to the tune of "The Farmer's in his Den".
 - Play around with familiar songs: change the speed, use a funny voice and face.
 - Sing and dance to your own favourite songs

- ② **TV.** Watch TV together and talk about what's happening. Programmes aimed at babies and younger children involve singing, interaction and simple language. Many also use some signs. However, try to limit the amount you watch and keep it to programmes designed for babies and toddlers.

- ② **Dummies.** If she uses a dummy, try to have some time without it in. Babies need to experiment with their mouths before they can learn to talk.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY-WHO ARE WE?

Your baby may not be talking or signing yet, but there are plenty of things you can do to help communication develop.

Our service is here to help you, your child and your family. It doesn't matter whether you choose to use speech, sign or both to communicate with your child.

We are here to listen to your concerns, answer your questions and provide advice and support around all aspects of communication.

We can visit you at home to look at how your baby communicates, talk about what to expect as language develops and discuss ideas to help you.

We also work closely with your Teacher of the Deaf, Sign Language Instructor and Nursery staff, as well as anybody who spends lots of time with your baby.

You can contact a Speech and Language Therapist in a number of ways:

- **Contact us directly at:**
Stapleford Care Centre
Church Street,
Stapleford
Nottingham NG9 8DB Tel: 0115 883 5187 or fax 0115 883 5188
- Ask your Teacher of the Deaf, Health Visitor, GP or CHAC to contact us for you
- Come along to the Early Days or Let's Listen groups at the Ear Foundation Centre in Lenton (ask your TOD for more details)

Other Sources of Information

National Deaf Childrens Society

www.ndcs.org.uk

Ear Foundation, Nottingham

www.earfoundation.org.uk

Early Support: Information for Parents

www.earlysupport.org.uk

Bookstart

www.bookstart.org.uk

Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists

www.rcslt.org.uk