

Workstream 2b – Local Offer

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## Including Sensory Services in the Local Offer

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**Author:** *Julie Jennings, Steve Rose*

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## Preface



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### Contact:

Lindsey Jane Rousseau, NatSIP Facilitator

T: 07711 030711

E: [lindsey.rousseau@natsip.org.uk](mailto:lindsey.rousseau@natsip.org.uk)

W: [www.natsip.org.uk](http://www.natsip.org.uk)

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## **1. Purpose**

This information is aimed at officers who are developing the local offer. The purpose is to ensure that local authority / Clinical Commissioning Group officers understand the importance of maintaining specialist services for children and young people (CYP) with sensory impairment (SI). It sets out the key information on services for CYP with SI and their parent carers.

## **2. Context**

For the majority of children, the senses of vision and hearing are the most important channels in the development of communication and understanding. They provide instant access to information and help us to make sense of the world around us. Most approaches take hearing and vision for granted so learning without them presents significant challenges to established ways of teaching and learning. In order to understand and address these challenges, specific advice from specialists who understand the nature and impact of a sensory impairment is essential to ensure that children and young people with sensory difficulties achieve their full potential.

This specialist support is essential to identify potential barriers to learning and living for individual children and to design appropriate strategies to address them. Effective support requires a range of interventions which will change according to a child's age and needs but are unlikely to lessen over time. As well as working directly with children themselves, specialists work closely with parents in the home and with educational settings on how children's needs should be met through inclusive approaches. Trained support is also needed to enable children to become proficient in specialist areas such as braille, habilitation (mobility and independence skills), communication (including sign language and tactile signing and social skills), all of which are central not only to their educational success but also to their longer term life chances.

## **3. What are the statutory reasons to provide services for children and young people with sensory impairment, including sensory support services?**

- Services must meet the obligations set out under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons and to take steps to take account of a person's disability. The Equality Act requires LAs to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people. This includes provision of an auxiliary aid or service and, where this relates to provision of information, reasonable adjustments include providing information in an accessible format.
- The draft SEND code of practice (2014) states that, if a child or young person is either visually or hearing impaired or both, the educational advice and information must be given after consultation with a person who is qualified to teach pupils or students with these impairments. [9.47]. This also applies to the process for reassessment.[9.186]
- The draft COP also makes clear that there is a requirement for Health to identify babies and children with SEN under school age and to bring them to the attention of the local authority. Support includes specialist teachers of CYP with SI to provide parents and child with home-based early learning programmes and approaches. [5.14, 5.15]

- In addition, the draft COP states that 'the school-specific information should relate to the school's arrangements for providing a graduated response to children's SEN. It should elaborate on the information provided at a local authority wide level in the Local Offer' (4.35).
- Deafblind Guidance (2009) places statutory duties on local authorities to identify, assess and provide appropriate services for people who are deafblind by suitably qualified practitioners.
- The Short Break duty requires local authorities to provide breaks (respite care) from caring for carers of disabled children which would include CYP with SI (Children Act 1989).
- There is a system of certification and registration for blind or partially sighted CYP to gather trends in data on which to base resource and service provision.
- There is an NHS Newborn Hearing Screening programme to universally screen all children for the presence of hearing impairment.

The local authority **must** set out in their Local Offer an authority-wide description of the educational and training provision children and young people with SEN or disabilities can expect to be provided from the funding provided to providers of relevant early years education, schools and the full range of post-16 providers in their area (draft COP section 4.32.) This should include information about all the areas specified in the *Special Educational Needs (Local Offer) (England) Regulations*.

This document will support you in identifying what Specialist Education, Health and Social Care Services you will provide to CYP with sensory impairments who require specialised longer term support.

#### **4. What are the questions that local offer developers need to know about sensory support services?**

Alongside the statutory guidance about developing a local offer, in order to meet the needs of CYP with SI, it is good practice to address the following questions:

##### **Q1: Are you consulting with families to find out what they need?**

**A1:** Parents of sensory impaired children have told NatSIP that they would like information in the local offer to be presented by type of need, so that they can see clearly what support is available for CYP with sensory impairment. To ensure you are making fully informed decisions, you need comprehensive and up-to-date data on CYP with SI in your area. This should be combined with a full understanding of the needs of children and their families. This can then be matched against the provision that is available both within and outside your local authority.

Steps will need to be taken to ensure that any engagement is inclusive, meaningful and accessible to CYP with SI. Local authorities should be aware that existing parent partnership groups/parent carer forums may not have strong representation from parents of CYP with SI. Instead, Children's Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG) or a local society for vision impairment or a sensory impairment service may be a better means of engaging with families. A number of parents of CYP with SI will have sensory impairments themselves or

Speak English as an additional language. Steps need to be taken to ensure they are able to effectively engage along with other parents.

**Q2: Have you included specific services for children and young people with sensory impairments, including specialist education services?**

A2: This may include:

- support for social and emotional development
- mobility and independence skills (habilitation)
- regular input from a qualified teacher of learners with sensory impairments (Mandatory Qualifications in Hearing Impairment, Visual Impairment and Multi-Sensory Impairment) both for direct teaching of specialist skills and for advisory work
- specialist equipment and access to technology
- one to one support (eg intervenors, communication support workers, note takers or interpreters)
- modification of teaching and learning strategies and adjustments for examinations
- working with parents to support the learning and development of their child.

**Q3: What do sensory impairment services do and how do they do it?**

A3: Qualified teachers of CYP with SI carry out a central role in the education of children from birth, working in homes, early years settings, schools and post 16 settings. This includes:

Early Intervention

- Managing referrals from health to education, with clear referral routes and eligibility criteria for specialist support, such as the [NatSIP Eligibility Criteria guidance](#) which is used by over 90% of services
- Assessing children's functional vision and hearing in liaison with health professionals
- Liaising with health professionals on the range of available low vision devices and hearing technology and how to use them
- Providing direct support to babies and young children and their parents in the home to support early development and learning through play and promote parental confidence. This may include the use of the SI specific Early Support [resources](#). The specialist teacher is frequently the professional best placed to take on a [key working](#) role.

Inclusive Teaching and Learning

- Advising in mainstream and specialist settings on strategies for curriculum access and independent learning
- Guiding the work of other professionals, such as teaching assistants, therapists, through INSET, ongoing specialist advice and direct teaching
- Teaching specialist skills, for example Braille, communication skills or the use of specialist equipment and ICT
- Adapting teaching and learning resources in print, audio or tactile formats
- Advising on access arrangements for exams
- Developing the communication skills of children with additional or complex needs.

#### Additional Curriculum

- Advising on how appropriate communication strategies can enhance children's functional vision and hearing
- Assessing and reviewing settings/environments for accessibility, such as acoustics, lighting levels, and health and safety
- Liaising with habilitation workers on mobility and independence skills
- Promoting emotional wellbeing and social and communication skills.

#### Transition

- Providing a birth to 25 service, including effective transition arrangements at key stages through awareness raising, transfer of information and ensuring specialist equipment is in place in the new setting
- Supporting students through transition into post 16/Further Education provision, employment and independent adulthood
- Providing a skills mix which allows services to develop specialisms eg in early years or post 16.

In addition, specialist services in health include:

- Ophthalmology, optometry, orthoptics, speech and language therapy, audiology, cochlear implant centres, specialist Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for deaf children.

Specialist services in social care include

- Social worker teams for Hearing Impaired/Vision Impaired/deafblind/disabled children, provision of specialist equipment for use in the home, accessible childcare and leisure services, habilitation.

#### **Q4: What are the minimum standards sensory services work to?**

A4: There are a number of national quality standards which specify good practice for CYP with SI. A list of [National Quality Standards for Sensory Impairment](#) is available on the NatSIP website.

#### **Q5: What qualifications do sensory specialists hold?**

A5: Sensory specialists in education hold a [specialist mandatory qualification](#) in addition to qualified teacher status. This is based on a wide range of learning outcomes. The importance of the qualification is recognized by DfE in the draft COP section 6.55:

*Schools should work closely with the local authority and other providers to agree the range of local services and clear arrangements for making appropriate requests. This might include schools commissioning specialist services directly. Such specialist services include, but are not limited to.....specialist teachers or support services, including specialist teachers with a mandatory qualification for children with hearing and vision impairment , including multi-sensory impairment, and for those with a physical disability. (Those teaching classes of children with sensory impairment must hold an appropriate qualification approved by the Secretary of State. Teachers working in an advisory role to support such pupils should also hold the appropriate qualification.)*

Other recognized qualifications include teaching assistants working with CYP with sensory impairments. NatSIP has mapped an appropriate [training pathway](#).

Further support roles for different areas of sensory impairment include:

- Habilitation Worker in vision impairment holding a qualification that fully matches the initial quality standards based registration requirements for habilitation practitioners (MISE UK)
- Intervenor in multi-sensory impairment
- Communication support workers with hearing impairment.

**Q6: Have you considered joint working with other local authorities to maximise the benefits from economies of scale while improving the quality of education and range of settings available to children and families?**

A6: NatSIP strongly encourages local authorities to consider regional commissioning as a way of delivering better services whilst achieving valuable economies of scale. Many local authorities attempt to meet the diverse needs of all children and young people with sensory impairment with just one or two qualified teachers. It would be unusual to find that such a small team will have the range of skills and expertise needed. The importance of regional collaboration to meet the needs of children and young people with highly specialist needs has been recognised by the Department for Education in the draft COP [3.67]:

*Regional commissioning: meeting the needs of children and young people with highly specialised and/or low incidence needs. Partners should consider strategic planning and commissioning of services or placements for children and young people with high levels of need across groups of authorities, or at a regional level. The benefits include:*

- *greater choice for parents and young people, enabling them to access a wider range of services or educational settings*
- *greater continuity of support for children and young people in areas where there is a great deal of movement across local authorities (for example, in London)*

*NHS England already commissions specialist health services at a regional and national level, so local partners will need to engage and integrate these arrangements to support local joint commissioning activity.*

As sensory impairment is a low incidence disability, children and young people in your area may travel some distance to specialist provision outside your authority. You should therefore include information on specialist provision for CYP with SI across the country, including independent and non-maintained provision.



## 5. Further resources from NatSIP

You can find more detailed guidance about universal, targeted and specialist education, health and social care provision for children and young people with sensory impairment in Creating Confidence in Local Services: NatSIP guidance to support the development of the Local Offer for children and young people with sensory impairment.

Information on joint commissioning of sensory support services can be found at:

[http://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc\\_details/761-joint-commissioning-key-information-to-support-joint-commissioning-of-services](http://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc_details/761-joint-commissioning-key-information-to-support-joint-commissioning-of-services)

Information for schools on the Schools Information Requirements can be found at:

[http://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc\\_details/752-local-offer-creating-confidence-in-services](http://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc_details/752-local-offer-creating-confidence-in-services)

## 6. Other resources

You may also find the following will support your planning:

[Eye health and sight loss; statistics and information for developing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

[Sight loss Data Tool](#)

[Putting the UK Vision Strategy into action for children and young people](#)

[Evidence based review Children and Young People with Vision Impairment](#)

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/knowledge-and-research-hub-research-reports/evidence-based-reviews>

[Regional data of future deafblind population](#)

Identifying and meeting the needs of children who are deafblind: [Creating opportunities, achieving expectations](#)

[Supporting the achievement of deaf children](#): resources for practitioners in early years settings, primary, secondary and special schools and further education

[Social care for deaf children and young people](#)

[Protecting specialist education support services for deaf children](#) – advice to local authorities

[Data on local authority educational provision for deaf children](#)

[Schools for deaf children in the UK](#): a directory of special schools

Prepared by Julie Jennings/ Steve Rose – Workstream co-leads (NatSIP)

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