

The effects of hearing aids on hearing patterns in children and young people with mild conductive or unilateral hearing losses: a case study.

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### ABSTRACT

Over recent years, increasing numbers of children and young people with mild conductive or unilateral hearing losses are being referred to the Sensory Inclusion Service in Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire, for hearing aid fitting. In order to ascertain the effects of the hearing aids, speech discrimination scores, in quiet conditions and in background noise, were compared with responses to a questionnaire on the use, benefits and drawbacks of hearing aids, completed by the families and teachers of the deaf of the primary and secondary aged children and young people involved.

Benefits of hearing aids, reported by families and teachers of the deaf, were primarily concerned with hearing sound and speech, improvements at school, avoidance of grommets and social benefits (registered particularly by families). Drawbacks reported were primarily concerning hearing aid management, management of fluctuating hearing loss and listening in background noise. Approximately equal numbers of positive and negative responses were reported in terms of changing views on hearing aids over time.

Results showed that hearing aids were used, either all or part of the time, in the vast majority of cases, part-time use being prevalent, with benefits in hearing speech in quiet conditions and in background noise and in location of sound. Hearing aids appear to be generally beneficial for this group of children and young people, providing justification for the fitting of hearing aids, although only a small proportion of responses overall reported no drawbacks, indicating the need for continued advice from professionals. This, together with the increasing numbers of hearing aid fits evidenced in this study for this group of children and young people, means that support is likely to be increasingly required for the future, to establish and maintain the aids at home and in educational settings, in light of the fluctuating nature of the hearing losses involved.

Key words: mild hearing loss, unilateral hearing loss, conductive hearing loss, hearing aids