



Policy for the Provision Use and Maintenance of Personal Listening Devices

A **personal listening device system** is used in the education of children with hearing loss. It is not intended to provide the child / young person with amplification. It is intended to provide a more useful and pleasant listening experience by reducing the disadvantages caused by microphone distance and by improving the signal to noise ratio*.

It is our view that a personal listening device forms an essential part of a child's listening system, and that it is therefore essential that a fully functioning PLD is ready for use, whenever they need it. Teachers are reminded that a PLD that is not used or is not fit for use has implications under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The funding of personal listening device systems

The funding of these systems is the responsibility of London Borough of Hillingdon for the following children:

- Hearing aid wearers who are resident in Hillingdon and who attend Hillingdon schools.
- Hearing aid wearers who are resident in Hillingdon and who attend mainstream schools in other local authorities, unless the school has a specialist HI provision.

SEND and Inclusion HI provision is responsible for the provision and maintenance of the personal listening device systems. However, if loss or damage is caused by negligence or malicious actions of the school staff or children the cost of repair or replacement may be the responsibility of the school as agreed via the loan agreement.

SEND and Inclusion HI provision will fund the checking of the systems by an approved audiology technician. The systems will be checked regularly. Interim subjective checking of the equipment will be carried out by a member of the SEND Specialist Support Team member (hearing impairment team).

Personal listening device systems remain the property of SEND and Inclusion HI service. Schools must contact a member of the hearing impairment team before allowing a student to take the equipment off the school premises. .

SEND and Inclusion does not fund the provision of personal listening device systems for students in further education except as a result of a service level agreement with the college concerned. The SEND HI will advise, transition students, how to apply for equipment for further education.



*Signal = the sounds that the child I young person is trying to listen to.

Noise = all the other sounds that are present.

Types of personal listening device systems issued and criteria for choice

Primary and secondary-aged pupils will use the most up to date and appropriate equipment available to the service.

Candidacy for receiving a personal listening device system

All school-aged children and young people with a hearing loss are considered to be candidates.

Exceptions include;

- pupils with unilateral losses who are not aided.

Children with on-going glue ear, who are issued with permanent hearing aids or bone conduction aids, will usually be considered for a Personal Listening device.

Personal listening device systems and pre-school children

Up to date and ongoing research has concluded that early amplification and use of radio aids can greatly support the development of speech and language and social skills in young children. Each child's needs will be considered on an individual basis and if it is felt that the child might benefit from using a personal listening device system with their family, the SEND HI team will discuss the type of Personal listening device available. The discussion of a trial will include the risk factor of a lockable battery compartment issues for the child and young siblings in the home. If appropriate a trial will be arranged, after which a decision can be made. Children in Pre-school settings such as playgroups and school nurseries will be assessed by the TOD and issued with a system if deemed appropriate, for use in the setting.*

Personal listening device systems and children with cochlear implants

There will be close liaison with the implant centre to ensure the child receives the most appropriate equipment. When a personal listening device system is issued to a child with a cochlear implant, it is the responsibility of the local TOD to contact the CI centre to arrange for them to balance the equipment ready for use. Thereafter, the equipment will be checked and balanced by the audiology technician at regular intervals.

Checking of personal listening device systems



Audiologists in the clinics with whom we have most contact have been asked to make program 1 the default FM + M program for all children. Initial balancing should be done using a test box and the FM Advantage protocol. This should be checked in the test box termly if possible. Daily subjective listening checks should be done using a stethoscope. For children in mainstream primary schools, this may be done by the class teacher, a teaching assistant or a welfare assistant.

All children should be encouraged to report problems with their systems. If there are problems with a system, the school should contact SEND HI Specialist Support and a member of the hearing impairment team will come to check the system as soon as practical. Where possible, the fault will be fixed on-site immediately. If this is not possible, HI Team will loan a system until the original is returned from repair.**

The HI team will provide central INSET for mainstream staff in the throughout each year. The Autumn term will be targeted due to new teachers and teachers new to HI children in their class. The training will focus on how to support an HI child in the school along with understanding the principles of hearing aids and listening devices. Troubleshooting and maintenance of systems and hearing aids are also covered in the training along with strategies and appropriate use of the system in all areas of the school. Secondary schools are able to have personalised training in their schools.

The use of personal listening device systems with sound field systems.

We have a positive attitude to the use of sound field systems in schools because of their proven benefit to all students and to their teachers. The biggest advantages for hearing aid users are the promotion of a good listening environment and the greater inclusivity that the use of a transmitter for all children can bring. Soundfield systems are not a replacement for personal FM systems for HI children.

SEND and inclusion HI team currently, do not provide soundfield systems to schools.

If a school has purchased a soundfield system, it is the responsibility of the school to liaise with the manufacturer(s) of the soundfield to keep the equipment balanced, in good repair and gain information on connectivity with personal FM systems to ensure that the optimum method of connecting them is used.

*see Appendix 1.

** subject to availability.

Appendix 1.



Personal Listening Device Guidance for preschool children

Eligibility criteria

Every child with a permanent bilateral hearing loss of any degree and long standing aided conductive hearing loss is considered a potential candidate for provision of a personal assistive listening device as part of their amplification package.

The SEND HI Team will provide parents or carers of deaf children with balanced information about personal listening devices as part of routine intervention and in order for families to make an informed choice.

A strong commitment to oversee the management of the equipment is required from the family before it is issued. Parental commitment of the equipment includes the following:

- Attendance at set audiological appointments
- To maintain contact with their Hearing Impairment Service, to regularly report usage benefits and challenges.
- An understanding that the equipment is on loan.
- To take good care of the equipment and replace if damaged or lost
- To follow advice and guidelines on use and safety.
- To co-operate with the Hearing Impairment Team in sharing information about safe use of the equipment to others that regularly support the child.
- Signed Loan agreement and insurance that covers the loaned equipment.

Amplification device prerequisites:

- Hearing aid battery drawers must be lockable and ear-level receivers must be either integrated or lockable onto the hearing aid.
- Activation of appropriate audio input features.
- All transmitters to have easy release lanyard clips or safe pocket clips, if available.

Funding of additional personal listening devices:

Whenever possible the Teachers of the Deaf will assist a child with a hearing loss and their family in trying personal listening devices. If this proves successful, then each



case will be considered individually and the equipment may be supplied by the SEND HI Team.

All personal listening device equipment is kept centrally by the SEND HI Team and re-allocated as equipment becomes available.

Equipment purchased by the SEND HI team remains the property of the service at all times. All equipment upgrades will be in accordance with need.

Fitting of Personal Listening devices:

The equipment should be set up as FM+M programme unless advised otherwise e.g. to take advantage of new technology

Build a family's confidence in their use of the equipment by teaching them how to operate it, and how to troubleshoot it and also how to be confident in observing and monitoring their child's listening responses.

SEND HI Team will increase level of support in the short term in order to support a child, family and nursery staff in understanding and using the equipment.

SENSS HI Team will organise in-house training for nursery staff who are in contact with the equipment if appropriate.

Written information about the equipment, its settings and appropriate use, should be shared with early years staff and parents.

Where possible, developmentally-appropriate speech discrimination tests will be administered with and without the device to evaluate the benefits of the equipment within 6 weeks of its issue.

When components are faulty, the SEND Team will organise a repair, a replacement will be issued if available, until repair is returned.

Initial fitting and setting up of a personal listening device with a cochlear implant speech processor is carried out by an appropriately trained professional.

All equipment issued by SEND HI Team must be returned to SEND HI Team in working order.

Personal Listening Device maintenance:



The equipment must be checked daily by parent or carer using subjective testing methods shown to them by the SEND HI Team.

FM Advantage protocol is applied by the visiting audiologist, at least once a year and when any of the hearing aid or listening device components are re-set or changed.

Audiological records to be kept in the child's file and shared with audiology clinics and other appropriate professionals with parental consent.

The benefits of the equipment must be evaluated by the TOD at least once a year.

Evaluation must also include feedback from parent and early year's staff when appropriate. Speech discrimination tests carried out in different listening conditions if appropriate.

There must be close liaison between the SEND HI Team and audiology clinics, including the exchange of written information and joint training.

This guidance will be reviewed on annual basis.

Created May 2010.

Reviewed September 2023.

Next review September 2026