National Sensory Impairment Partnership

A PLACE TO START - TOP 10 TIPS

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These tips are intended to support colleagues from the frontline workforce who are new to working with a pupil with sensory impairment (or require a short refresher!)

They provide a quick introductory guide to useful resources for those who may be short of time and need a starting point.

1. **Every local authority provides support for pupils with sensory impairment through a sensory support service (SI, HI, VI or MSI service)**. Your local SEN office should be able to signpost you to your main contact. You can always check your local offer to find out about services in your area.

   - Details for all local offers can be found on the RNIB website.[1]

2. Find out about the implications of sensory impairment. There are three main sensory impairments, hearing, vision and multi-sensory (a combination of both). Each has distinct implications on accessing information. Check out the following links for starter guides:

   Hearing Impairment

   - See NatSIP's key facts pages on the Sensory Learning Hub on its NatSIP website.[2]
   - See the Council for Disabled Children's early support materials on hearing impairment for parents on its website.[3]

   Vision Impairment

   - See NatSIP's key facts pages on the Sensory Learning Hub on its website.[4]
   - See the RNIB's information guide for parents on the RNIB website.[5]
   - See the Council for Disabled Children's early support materials on vision impairment on its website.[6]

   Multi-Sensory Impairment

   - See NatSIP key facts pages on the Sensory Learning Hub on its website.[7]
   - See the Council for Disabled Children's early support materials on multi-sensory impairment on its website.[8]
   - The CDC's development journal for children with multiple needs is also useful.[9]

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[1] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/insight-online/finding-local-support-families-children-vi
[2] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/about-sensory-impairment/hearing
[3] See https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/early-support-information-deafness-and-hearing-loss
[4] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/about-sensory-impairment/vision
[5] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/insight-online/information-guide-parents
[6] See https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/early-support-information-visual-impairment
[7] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/about-sensory-impairment/multi-sensory
[8] See https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/early-support-information-multi-sensory-impairments
[9] See https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/development-journal-children-multiple-needs

3. **Get the support the child needs**. Many children with sensory Impairment will need additional support. This may be provided through **assess-plan-do-review** or an **EHC plan**.

    If an assessment for an EHC plan is undertaken, this must include the advice from a specialist teacher in the relevant sensory impairment (HI, VI or MSI). Children might need support with communication, mobility, classroom access, independence, equipment, reading, concept development and social skills and may benefit from services such as specialist teaching support, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy or physiotherapy. Also consider if there are any local leisure services or voluntary organisations who can help provide out of school activities or family support. Some national organisations are listed below, but don't forget to check your local offer to see what local support is available.

    - See the NatSIP guidance on applying Assess-Plan-Do-Review to children with Sensory Impairments.[10]
    - See the NatSIP guidance on Better (EHC Plan) Assessments.[11]

    See also the websites of relevant national organisations:

    - **National Deaf Children's Society** (NDCS)[12]
    - **Royal National Institute of Blind People** (RNIB)[13]
    - **Sense**, a national charity that supports people who are deafblind, have sensory impairments or complex needs[14]

    See also the RNIB compilation of links to local offers on its website.[15]

4. **Get some classroom advice**. Your local sensory support service will have a key role in supporting you. There are also some published materials to help you develop strategies to support your pupil:

    Hearing Impairment

    - The National Deaf Children's Society/NatSIP series of booklets *Supporting the achievement of deaf children in…* are available via the NatSIP website.[16]

    Vision Impairment

    - Resources from RNIB website.[17]

    Multi-Sensory Impairment

    - Resources from the Sense website.[18]

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[10] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/natsip-briefing-documents-and-papers/assess-plan-do
[11] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/better-assessments-including-model-ehc-plans
[12] See http://www.ndcs.org.uk/
[13] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/
[14] See https://www.sense.org.uk/
[15] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/insight-online/finding-local-support-families-children-vi
[16] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/suporting-the-si-workforce/supporting-the-achievement-of-deaf-children-in
[17] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-professionals-education-professionals/guidance-teaching-and-learning
[18] See https://www.sense.org.uk/content/teaching-strategies

5. **Be clear about support roles**. Children with sensory impairment often have identified or targeted support provided by teaching assistants. Sometimes these can be specialist roles called communication support workers (for HI), note takers (for HI, VI or MSI) or intervenors (for MSI). See the guides to the role of the teaching assistants working with children with SI below:

Hearing Impairment

- See the NatSIP teaching assistant guidance for HI.[19]

Vision Impairment

- See the NatSIP teaching assistant guidance for VI.[20]

Multi-Sensory Impairment

- See the NatSIP teaching assistant guidance for MSI.[21]

6. **Get some training**. Many local authorities provide introductory training locally. Sometimes this may be online so you can study at your own pace. Check out the training section of the NatSIP Sensory Learning Hub.[22]

7. If you have a specific query, ask on the **NatSIP Sensory Learning Hub forum** pages. This is a developing forum and is a good place to ask a question and seek advice from a range of specialists. (Requires free registration and log in to access).[23]

8. If you are looking for specific resources, look at the **NatSIP What Works Database**.[24] This contains lots of ideas, and is targeted at the frontline workforce. Always discuss the appropriateness of resources for your pupils with your sensory support service.

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[19] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/curriculum/teaching-assistant-guidance/410-01-teaching-assistant-guidance-for-hi

[20] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/curriculum/teaching-assistant-guidance/1001-04-teaching-assistant-guidance-for-vi

[21] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/curriculum/teaching-assistant-guidance

[22] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/slh-home/develop

[23] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/forum/index If you are not registered on the NatSIP website (registration is free and open to all) see the guide at https://www.natsip.org.uk/public-documents/139-natsip-registration-howto

[24] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/slh-home/know

9. Consider if the child has access to all the **technology** support he or she needs. If your pupil already has technology (for example, hearing aids, radio aids, video magnifier, screen reader, braille notetaker, VOCA, etc.) do you know how to use it? Can you trouble shoot if things go wrong? Do you know how to create a good listening environment for learning in education? Your local sensory support service will provide assessment for, advice on and training to support you with technology, which can improve young people's access to school and learning.

   Whilst there is much good information on the web, remember that it does not replace the advice of your local sensory support service, and might not be appropriate for every child.

Hearing Impairment

- The National Deaf Children's Society series of booklets *Supporting the achievement of deaf children in…* available via the NatSIP website.[25]
- The National Deaf Children's Society guidance on quality standards for the use of personal radio aids available on its website.[26]
- The University College London Hospital (UCLH) document *Cochlear Implants – FM Training Tool* available on its website.[27]
- The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) Guidance Document C3 – Checking Cochlear Implants available on its website.[28]
- The NDCS resource for parents on how radio aids can help deaf children.[29]
- NDCS advice on creating good listening conditions for learning in education.[30]

Vision Impairment

- Online guide to assistive technology available on the RNIB website.[31]
- Videos showing technology in education available on the RNIB website.[32]
- The RNIB Tech Catalogue.[33]

Multi-Sensory Impairment

- The Sense technology pages[34] and technology blog.[35]
- See the resources tagged 'Effective use of technology' listed in the NatSIP sensory learning hub What Works Database.[36]
- See also the NatSIP technology briefings.[37]

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[25] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/suporting-the-si-workforce/supporting-the-achievement-of-deaf-children-in

[26] See http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/our_resources/education_resources.html#contentblock25

[27] See http://www.uclh.nhs.uk/OURSERVICES/SERVICEA-Z/ENTS/CIM/Pages/FMTrainingTool.aspx

[28] See http://www.batod.org.uk/content/resources/audiology/refreshers/checking/C3-ci.pdf

[29] See: http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/technology_and_products/technology_at_school/index.html

[30] See www.ndcs.org.uk/acoustics

[31] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-using-technology-beginners-guides/beginners-guide-assistive-technology

[32] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-professionals-education-professionals/technology-education

[33] See https://www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/APDF-EverydayTech_Catalogue.pdf

[34] See https://www.sense.org.uk/content/technology

[35] See https://blog.sense.org.uk/2016/12/technology-is-not-just-for-life-its-for-christmas/

[36] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/advanced-search/search-results?order=alpha&dir=3&cat=247&query=all&usematch=1&filter=206&jr_category=effective-use-of-technology

[37] See https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/natsip-briefing-documents-and-papers/provision-of-equipment-and-technology-briefings

10. **Plan for transition early**. Transitions between phases are just as important as those transitions towards the end of the school career. Involve the pupil in decisions and make time for transitions to work. There are some great resources available to support transitions to adulthood.

Hearing Impairment

- National Deaf Children's Society guidance *Supporting deaf young people through transition.*[38]

Vision Impairment

- The RNIB document *Transition guide – Bridging the Gap.*[39]

Multi-Sensory Impairment

The Sense document series *Getting a result: the transition into adulthood.*[40]

- See also the RNIB compilation of links to local offers on its website.[41]

11. **Finally, don't be afraid to ask for help. Most children and young people with sensory impairment are included in mainstream schools and often, sensory impairment may be unrecognised in special schools. There is a wealth of specialists whose role it is to help you to support these children to get the best out of their education. Evidence shows that sensory impairment is not a barrier to educational attainments if children and young people are given the right support.**

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[38] See http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/our_resources/education_resources.html
[39] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/young-people-school-life-and-planning-ahead-making-transition-school/transition-guide-bridging-gap
[40] See https://www.sense.org.uk/content/getting-result-information-pack
[41] See http://www.rnib.org.uk/insight-online/finding-local-support-families-children-vi