



### Putting the Child before the Deafness

Deaf children are first and foremost children and their lives will be dominated by their needs as a child. The **Natural Aural Approach** seeks to manage the child's hearing impairment whilst they enjoy, and benefit from the normal childhood learning experiences within the family home and community. Children need to hear to develop language. Today's hearing aid technology provides this opportunity, just as rich linguistic interaction ensures there is lots worth listening to. Getting the technology right is key. Two carefully prescribed, fitted and managed 'hearing aids or cochlear implants' provide deaf children with the means to listen and talk as all children do.

The **Natural Aural Approach** is about working at the natural pace of the child, just as a hearing child does. It is important that we allow deaf children to go through all the stages of natural language development without skipping a stage or missing a stage.

It is about hearing and listening, understanding and talking. Language develops through listening first. It is about having meaningful language to listen to. Language that is firstly in the here and now, but will in time question, reflect thinking, feelings and solve problems; language that develops and expresses imagination, anticipates the future and reflects on the past; that makes sense and has a purpose; that is fun and interactive and that everyone around them uses spontaneously, is the language that underpins **The Natural Aural approach**.

## The Natural Aural Approach

The right language is the language of the family and community that the child is born into. It is the language of everyday routines; the social language of the home; the endearments; the language that makes you laugh; that makes you feel better and that tells you that the people around you care. It is the language of song and the language of stories.

Language used with the deaf child is no different from that used with a hearing child of the same age. It will be expressive and intonated with a natural rhythm and pace.

The natural rhythm of speech is the easiest to hear for any child, deaf or hearing. Our natural gestures and facial expressions are equally important and a natural part of the way we interact with babies and children. It tells them we are interested in them and that we are enjoying talking with them. It helps give meaning to what is said.

Children learning to listen don't need to watch - to lipread - because they are learning to hear, using their ears. They will however check you are listening to them and that you are interested in their responses.

Talking and listening between adults and children is the way babies and children develop language. This

interaction is not taught but parents naturally enable it as they play with their child. It is natural, it is spontaneous and it is always meaningful to those taking part, whether they are the listeners or talkers. It happens as parents and children have fun together and enjoy each other's company.



**BECAUSE IT WORKS**

**The Natural Aural Approach**

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