



One minute guide

Sensory Service

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What is the Sensory Service?

The Sensory Service is part of Complex Needs in Children's Services. It promotes the educational inclusion and achievement of all children and young people with visual impairment, hearing impairment and multi-sensory impairment (deafblindness) in Leeds.

Who does the service work with, and what do they offer?

The service works with children and young people with sensory impairment aged 0-25 years, from the time of diagnosis or referral and with their parents/ carers and family to support the child or young person. The service also works with educational settings (including nurseries, children's centres, schools and colleges), and other professionals and organisations working or involved with the life of the child and their family.

The service provides:

- Assessment** of the child or young person's sensory functioning, and their needs in the context of learning and development;
- Training and advice** for families, settings and others working with the child or young person on how to meet the identified needs, and to maximise learning, independence and wellbeing;
- Direct teaching** to children and young people of specialist skills and strategies to mitigate the effects of their sensory impairment and achieve good outcomes;
- Ongoing **monitoring, challenge and support** to all as the child or young person with sensory impairment grows up and develops;
- Support to **access the curriculum**, for example through [British Sign Language](#) interpretation, [Braille](#) and large print materials;
- Advice to the local authority**, including statutory advice for Education, Health and Care needs assessments;
- Signposting** to other relevant services and support.

The service is comprised of three teams; the Visually Impaired Team (VIT), the Deaf and Hearing Impaired Team (DAHIT), and Deaf START.

What does the Visually Impaired Team (VIT) do?

VIT provides assessment, training and advice and works directly with children with visual impairment. They teach a range of skills - e.g. [Braille](#), touch typing, use of specialist equipment, improved use of functional vision, and mobility and independence skills.

VIT consists of specialist staff including teachers of the visually impaired, officers who focus on support particularly for the younger age group, officers who promote independence and mobility skills, and officers who produce and adapt learning materials for visually impaired children and young people, and train educational settings to adapt their own resources.

What does the Deaf and Hearing Impaired Team (DAHIT) do?

DAHIT provides assessment, training and advice and works directly with deaf and hearing impaired children and young people. The team focus particularly on developing language and communication skills, and promoting good listening and use of hearing aids and devices. DAHIT consists of specialist staff, including teachers of the deaf; communication support workers who assist with communication and interpretation needs in settings; deaf instructors whose first language is [British Sign Language \(BSL\)](#) and who teach this and other skills to children, families and staff; and liaison officers who promote engagement with families.

DAHIT also provides the specialist staffing for resourced provisions for nursery, primary and secondary aged children and young people. These provisions are for deaf children with severe or profound hearing loss, who require specialist input above that which can be provided in a local setting. To attend one of these, the child must have it named on their Education, Health and Care Plan.

What does the Deaf START team do?

Deaf START provides a traded service to post-16 providers only, which focuses mainly on access to the curriculum for deaf learners through BSL interpretation and the development of literacy skills. Deaf START consists of a team of specialist staff, including BSL interpreters, and English support tutors who provide specialist literacy teaching to deaf learners. Deaf START also arrange for specialist note takers, who are trained in working with deaf students.

How can practitioners support children and young people with sensory impairments?

If practitioners are working with a child or young person with a sensory impairment, they should make sure they understand their individual needs and the implications of their impairment. Staff from the sensory service can assist with this, providing support and advice as appropriate. Awareness training for teams is also available on request.

If a practitioner has concerns that a child or young person may have an unrecognised sensory impairment, they should advise the child or young person's parent or carer to visit their GP, and they can also contact the Sensory Service for support and advice.

Further information and key contacts

Further information about the support offered by the Sensory Service is available [here](#).

The Sensory Service Lead is Tony Bowyer: tony.bowyer@leeds.gov.uk.

You can contact the Sensory Service on 0113 39 50556, and Deaf START on 0113 39 51094.

Support, information and resources are also available from national charities:

[National Deaf Children's Society \(NDCS\)](#); and [Royal National Institute for the Blind \(RNIB\)](#).