



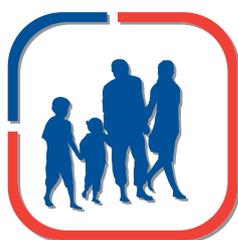
# DeafHearie

Services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing People



## Child Development: Year 1

**A Factsheet for Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children**



# Parents Corner



# Child Development: Year 1

This factsheet outlines some general developmental milestones for children in the first year of life, focussing particularly on language development. Parent behaviours that are effective at supporting child development are described. Also, some parent behaviours that are particularly effective in supporting the development of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children are highlighted. The 'Notes' sections aim to provide more explanation of suggested ideas and strategies.

It is important to remember that every child is different and all children do not develop in the same way or at the same pace. The developmental milestones and parent behaviours are provided as a general guide for parents, to assist parents in deciding and providing the most appropriate support for their child and family.

## Child Development: 0-3 months

Developmental Milestones:	Parenting a Hearing Child	Parenting a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the first few weeks after birth, baby sleeps most of the time.</li> <li>• In the first couple of months, Baby learns to recognise basic vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch stimuli. This learning involves vital neurological/brain development. Examples: baby may be frightened by loud noise, baby looks towards light, baby looks at moving toys and colours that are close enough to see (20cm).</li> <li>• After a couple of months baby has better control of eye muscles and begins to stare and smile at faces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents provide a warm and safe environment and regular feeding.</li> <li>• As baby becomes more alert after a couple of months, parents begin to 'talk' to baby: this can involve 'normal' language, for example, naming what is going on, or 'prelingual' type language, such as 'cooing' or 'babbling', for example, saying 'baba, dada, mama'.</li> <li>• Parents tend to use high tones and exaggerated facial expressions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents provide a warm and safe environment and regular feeding.</li> <li>• As baby becomes more alert after a couple of months, parents begin to 'talk' to baby: this can involve 'normal' language, for example, naming what is going on, or 'prelingual' type language, such as 'cooing' or 'babbling', for example, saying 'baba, dada, mama'.</li> <li>• Parents tend to use high tones and exaggerated facial expressions.</li> </ul>

### Notes:

Few parents are likely to know at this stage if their child has a hearing loss, so no major difference in parenting behaviour towards hearing babies or babies with hearing loss can be expected.

Research has shown that Deaf parents are more likely to concentrate on using facial expressions and tend to stroke their babies faces more at this stage. These behaviours are likely to encourage baby to look at a person's face and support early communication.



# Child Development: Year 1



## Child Development: 4-6 months

### Developmental Milestones:

- Baby learns to hold head up and to sit with support.
- Baby makes sounds/babbles with intention.
- Baby turns head towards voice; looks towards movement and watches intently what is going on.
- Baby learns to grasp and hold objects, and begins to put things in baby's mouth.
- Baby can recognise familiar people and toys that are with 2 to 3 metres.
- Baby enjoys cuddling. Baby responds appropriately to friendly or angry tones.

### Parenting a Hearing Child

- Parents continue to talk to baby using a combination of language and 'babbling'. There is more 'naming' of people and events as baby becomes more alert.
- Parents and baby have 'chats', where parents 'talk' to baby and baby babbles and coos.
- Parents 'mirror' baby's emotions using tone of voice and facial expression: 'ahh, poor baby' if baby is in pain, or 'hello baby' as baby smiles and kicks on seeing its mother.

### Parenting a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

- Parents continue to talk to baby using a combination of language and 'babbling'. There is more 'naming' of people and events around baby as baby becomes more alert.
- Deaf parents are more likely to point to what they are talking about to help communication. They also may tap baby on the arm or body to get baby's attention.
- Parents 'mirror' baby's emotions using tone of voice and facial expression. Deaf parents tend to pay more attention to baby's movements, seeing this as an expression of emotion or an attempt to communicate. They 'mirror' this behaviour through their own movement and facial expression.

## Notes:

Some parents, especially the parents of babies who have received a hearing screening test shortly after birth, will receive the diagnosis of their child's hearing loss during this period. This is often an upsetting and emotional time for parents, and many parents have identified the need for information and support at this stage. Also, parents who have not received a diagnosis may begin to have concerns about their baby's hearing if they notice that their baby does not react to sounds in the environment or babble and vocalise as might be expected. Some parents may not receive confirmation of their child's hearing loss until much later in their child's development.

During this period, 'naming' becomes an important support for a child's development, especially language development. 'Naming' means parents describing events and emotions in the child's environment. 'Here's daddy, hurrah!'; 'aaah, dolly fell, poor dolly!'; 'yum yum, lovely cake'; 'aaah! Daddy gone! Sad baby!' At this stage parents accompany these words with exaggerated facial expressions, such as a smiling or sad face; and exaggerated actions and gestures, such as rubbing one's tummy whilst eating and saying 'yum yum'. This helps baby to learn to recognise different emotions and experiences. These parent behaviour support child development in many ways, including social, emotional, language and cognitive development.

# Child Development: Year 1

## Child Development: 7-9 months

### Developmental Milestones:

- Baby can sit up without support and begins to crawl.
- Baby enjoys playing 'peek a boo', and learns to laugh and giggle.
- Communication becomes more sophisticated: baby can make babbling sounds similar to words such as 'ba ba' or 'da da'. Babies who use sign language are also able to 'babble' using their hands.
- Baby begins to use gestures, waving and pointing to communicate.
- Baby is able to reach out and pick up objects, and shows a lot of interest in exploring them.
- Baby's hand-eye coordination improves, and is able to pick up crumbs.
- Baby becomes emotionally attached to mother and significant others, and often shows anxiety towards strangers.
- Baby can show annoyance or fear by holding its body stiff, for example when picked up by a stranger.

### Parenting a Hearing Child

- Parents continue to 'name' what is happening in the baby's environment, including what other people are doing. Parents pay particular attention to what baby is looking at: 'Oh...daddy is fixing the door', 'Mammy is making dinner'.
- Parents repeat baby's babbling, such as 'ba ba' 'da da' and 'ma ma'.
- Again, parents pay attention to what baby is doing and name this: 'that's the ball'; 'oh, you are shaking the ball!'; 'Ahh...the ball fell, it's gone!'; 'Mammy will get the ball...now, here is the ball!'
- Parents also name emotions of baby and others: 'baby is sad mammy's gone', 'baby loves teddy', 'John fell...ahhh, poor John is sad'.

### Parenting a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

- Parents continue to 'name' what is happening in the baby's environment. However, it is important to ensure that baby is looking at you before 'naming', (you may have to wait longer), and pointing and moving towards the object or person also help baby understand the communication.
- Parents continue to 'mirror' baby's sounds and movements.
- Parents must wait when their baby is playing and exploring! This can be challenging and counter intuitive, especially for hearing parents. (See notes below). After baby has explored an object, he will look to his parent, and this is the moment to 'name' and share the experience.
- Parents 'name' the emotions of baby and other people, using language and facial expression. Again, parents should wait for baby to look to them before naming.

### Notes:

When a hearing baby is playing and exploring, parents name what is happening while baby is playing. This does not disturb baby's concentration or enjoyment. In fact in this situation, naming while baby is playing enhances baby's enjoyment, baby's self esteem, and baby's concentration and cognitive development. However, this parent behaviour would not be as effective in supporting the development of most Deaf or Hard of Hearing children.

Most babies and young children with hearing loss need to be looking at the person to understand what is being communicated. It is therefore important that parents do not 'interrupt' young Deaf and Hard of Hearing children while they are playing, exploring and concentrating, but wait until the baby looks to them before naming the baby's activity and emotions. If possible, it is important for parents to be near baby's eye level, so baby can make eye contact easily, and can easily revert to play and exploration afterwards.

Spencer (2001) writes that, especially with a young Deaf or Hard of Hearing baby, a parent should move their hand or body so that the baby can see their communication while still looking at the toy or activity:

'This stage of development presents special challenges for persons communicating with babies who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. A hearing child can hear and understand language even when looking at an object instead of the speaker. But, this is usually not the case for a child who is Deaf or has a significant hearing loss. A child with hearing loss will hear spoken language only partially, in a distorted way, or perhaps not at all. The child needs to see the message in order to understand it. Whether the message is signed or spoken, it is helpful for the child to be able to see the face and body of the person who is sending the message. The child can get information from mouth movements, facial expression, and body language in addition to information from sound or sign.'(Spencer, 2001).



# Child Development: Year 1

## Child Development: 10-12 months

Developmental Milestones:	Parenting a Hearing Child	Parenting a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baby can recognise and respond to its name.</li> <li>• Baby can use one or more words with meaning, and can shake its head from side to side to indicate 'no'.</li> <li>• Baby understands simple communications and instructions, especially if visual cues are given.</li> <li>• Baby can cooperate with being dressed by holding out an arm or leg.</li> <li>• Baby is aware of the social importance of communication.</li> <li>• Baby also develops new motor skills, such as standing and walking while holding parents hands or holding on to furniture. This means baby can explore more of the environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents continue to name what baby is doing and also name what is going on in the environment.</li> <li>• Parents repeat what baby says and build on this communication: 'No, baby doesn't want any more dinner!'</li> <li>• Parents use short and simple sentences to communicate with baby. At this stage baby is just beginning to understand some of the language involved in the communication.</li> <li>• Baby may use some simple words appropriately, such as pointing at a dog and saying 'bow wow'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents continue to name what baby is doing and what is happening in the baby's environment, ensuring that baby is looking at them before communicating.</li> <li>• Parents repeat baby's communications, both sounds and movements</li> <li>• Parents may touch or tap baby on the arm to get baby's attention before communicating.</li> <li>• Parents should pay extra attention to baby's gestures or pointing. Babies with hearing loss tend to use more of these behaviours to communicate: responding to them (by mirroring the movements and naming) will encourage baby to communicate more.</li> <li>• Babies who sign (including hearing babies) can use several words/signs to communicate.</li> <li>• Deaf parents who sign also use short signed sentences of two to three signs to communicate with their babies at this stage.</li> </ul>

### Notes:

Some people, including professionals, believe that if you use signs with babies with hearing loss, this will not help the babies to learn to use their residual hearing and develop speech. In a recent report commissioned by the National Council for Special Education, the authors reviewed the research available and concluded that 'the addition of visual information (signs) has not been found to interfere with the process of developing spoken language' (Marschark and Spencer, 2009). On the other hand researchers have found that using signs with young hearing babies from the age of about 6 months helps them develop expressive language earlier (because the babies' brains are able to express language using their hands before their voices have matured sufficiently to speak clearly). Not only do the babies learn language quicker, but they were found to have significantly increased intelligence at 8 years of age (Acredolo and Goodwyn, 2000). These hearing babies tended to stop signing around 3 years of age as they developed speech.

During the first year of life babies learn some simple language and some ways to communicate, such as smiling, pointing and perhaps a couple of words. More importantly, babies learn about the **IMPORTANCE** of communication and the **POWER** of communication. Babies experience how communication is important for basic needs (for example, to tell parents baby is hungry or uncomfortable); for emotional needs (how to share that baby is happy or sad); and for getting attention and affirmation (by pointing to or holding up objects they are interested in).

In the first year babies don't learn to use a lot of 'formal' language, such as words or signs to communicate. Instead they learn the 'nuts and bolts' of communication, which will assist them to learn a lot more formal language in the following years. The following is a list of some of these 'nuts and bolts':

- \*Watching and observing others
- \*Responding to others
- \*Making eye contact
- \*Moving arms and legs
- \*Concentration
- \*Making sounds/babbling/pointing
- \*Smiling/laughing
- \*Cooperating with others.

If your baby learns to use these behaviours and skills by 12 months of age, then your baby is well prepared to improve and develop language and communication in the years ahead.



# Child Development: Year 1

## Which buggy is best for your baby?

**Parents can purchase buggies where their baby is facing towards them or facing away. Which is better for the baby's development?**

The National Literacy Trust in the UK has completed research into this matter as part of their Talk To Your Baby campaign. They found that babies spend on average up to two hours per day in baby buggies or pushchairs. They noted that a 'cultural belief' existed that once babies can sit up, they benefit 'from looking out in the world around them' (National Literacy Trust, 2005). However, the Trust also pointed out that research has repeatedly demonstrated that in order for young children to make sense and use of their experience of the wider world, they need parents to 'help mediate and make sense of it for them' (ibid, 2005).

The National Literacy Trust study found that mothers spoke twice as much to their baby when the baby was facing them in the buggy, compared to when their baby was facing away from them. The quality of interaction was also affected: the study also found that mothers were three times more likely to laugh, while babies were ten times more likely to laugh while they were facing each other. The results were clear: mothers and babies in buggies communicated more and had more fun when they were facing each other.

**The research clearly indicates (not unexpectedly!) that towards-facing buggies are best for babies and young children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.**

### References:

Zeedyk, Dr. M. S. 'What's life in a buggy like?: The impact of buggy orientation on parent-infant interaction and infant stress' (National Literacy Trust, UK, 2008).

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Acredolo, L. and Goodwyn, S. **Baby Signs** (Vermillion, London, 2000).

Marschark, M. and Spencer, E. **Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children: An International Review**. (NCSE, Ireland, 2009).

Spencer, P.E. **A Good Start: Suggestions for Visual Conversations with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Babies and Toddlers**. (Gallaudet University, USA, 2001).



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