



DeafHear.ie

Services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing People



Weekend for Families of Children Newly Diagnosed with a Hearing Loss

22nd - 24th February 2013

Summary Report



ABOUT THE EVENT

The event started in 2007 and has become an annual event in the DeafHear calendar. This residential weekend is aimed at families who have children that have been diagnosed with a hearing loss in the last 12-18months.

The purpose of this weekend is to provide families with relevant information from DeafHear staff and other professionals. It also provides an opportunity to meet other families in a similar situation to themselves. This is often the first time parents have met with other parents and have the opportunity to benefit from sharing their experiences with their peers. Parents attend presentations/workshops during the day while the children are in a crèche and in the evenings families socialise with each other.

The event is held in the Heritage Hotel in Portlaoise from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon.

FEBRUARY 2013 WEEKEND

On Friday evening the families arrived between 4pm to 6pm, they met one another and chatted, while children were entertained with art and craft activities, toys and games. Dinner was served buffet style. Some parents availed of a one to one session with a DeafHear staff member to discuss their child's audiogram and listen to a simulation of the hearing loss.

On Saturday and Sunday while the parents attended the presentations/workshops the children were in a mobile crèche facility provided by 'Catkins on the Move'. This service employs qualified childcare staff that have been Garda vetted. During the weekend the crèche had a successful inspection by the HSE.

Saturday consisted of a session entitled "Sharing experiences of diagnosis" where parents discussed their feelings regarding their child's diagnosis with their peers. After a short refreshment break the parents reconvened into two groups, one for Mothers and one for Fathers. Again this was a discussion group. The children joined their parents for lunch after a busy morning in the crèche. In the afternoon there were presentations on 'Communication' and 'Making an Informed Choice'. Saturday evening was a relaxed affair where the parents socialised and the children were entertained by a children's entertainer and later on with some DVD's.

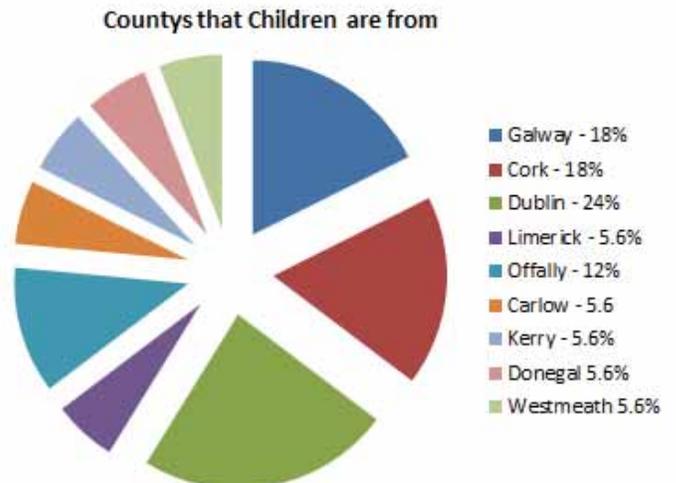
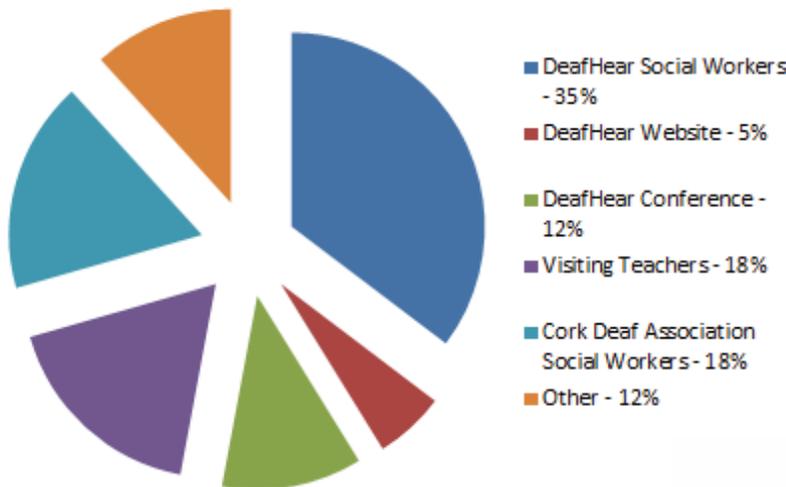
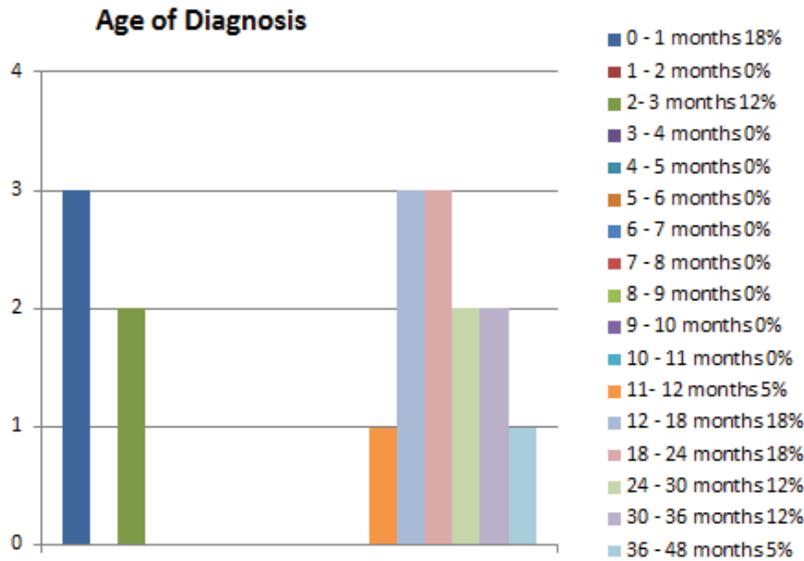
On Sunday there was an interactive session from our Deaf & Hearing Awareness Training manual which helped parents understanding of what it is like to have a hearing loss. This was followed by information on assistive technology. The final session of the weekend was led by families with older Deaf children who spoke about their experiences as a parent, a sibling and the child with a hearing loss.

The weekend finished with a lovely lunch while the parents talked and the children played with their new friends.



ANALYSIS OF FAMILIES

17 families attended the weekend from Carlow, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Limerick, Offaly and Westmeath. The group consisted of 33 adults and 25 children, ages ranged between 6months to 8years.



ANALYSIS OF EVALUATION FORMS

The evaluation forms are an important way for us to receive feedback regarding all aspects of the weekend and we really appreciate parents taking the time to complete them.

Firstly, the evaluation forms asked parents to express their expectations of the weekend; we requested that this was completed on the Friday evening.

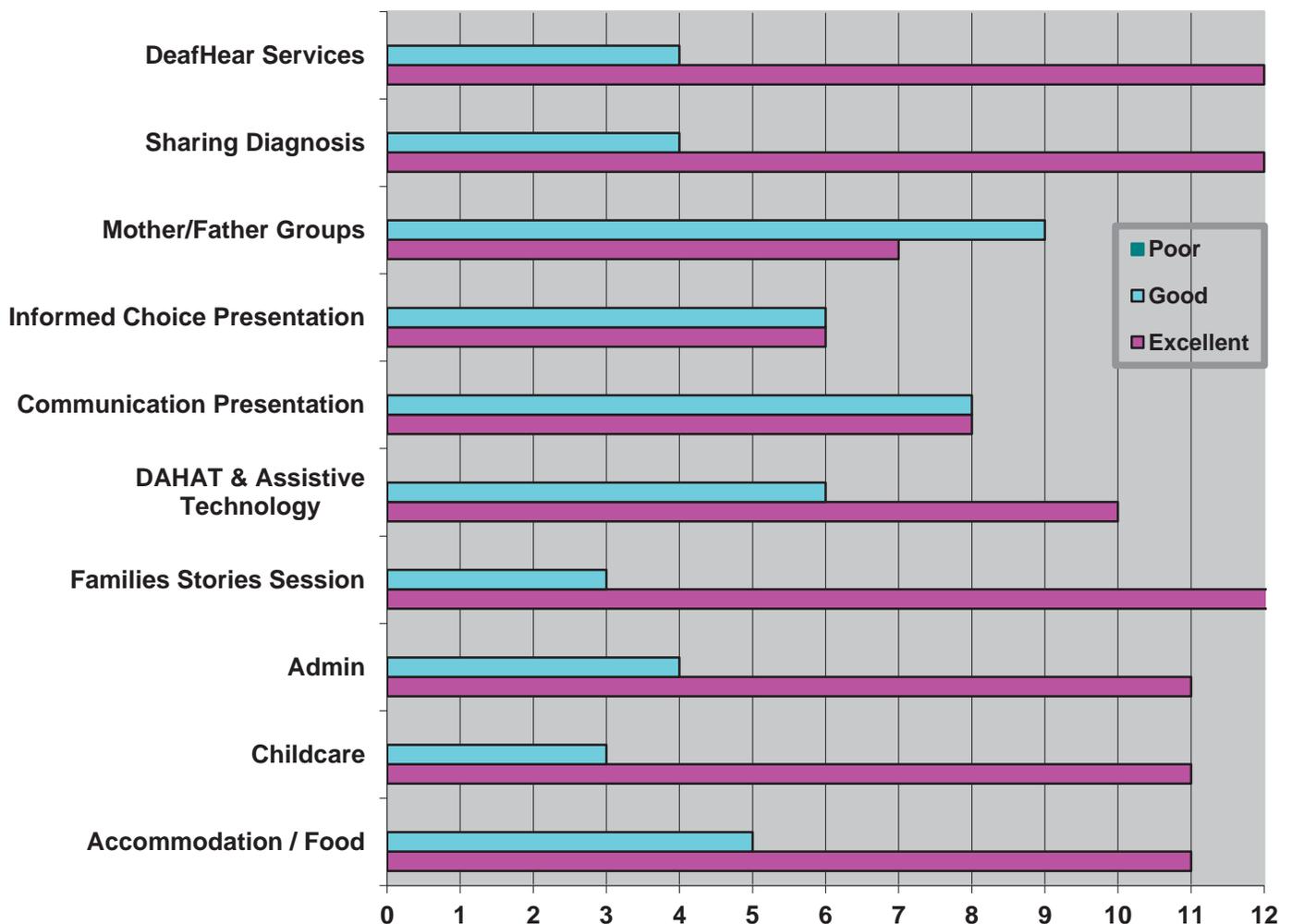
Parents used the rating system of 'Poor', 'Good' or 'Excellent' regarding each presentation/workshop, the childcare service and the hotel facilities, and there was also an opportunity to comment if they wished.

Finally, parents could comment on how their expectations have been or not been met.

Each parent was asked to complete the form. 16 forms were returned out of 33.

A summary of the evaluation form follows:

Graph of the responses from the evaluation form



What are your expectations for the weekend?

"Well I hope that I will understand more what's waiting for me and my son before and after CI surgery and how that will help my son"

"Meet other parents. Become more equipped to help our son develop to the best of his ability"

"To meet other families that have children who have hearing losses like my son. And to find out more about hearing aids and the cochlear implant and other information that might be useful to me"

"To get more information from DeafHear on services. To meet and share experiences with other parents"

"To meet other parents, share experiences, see other children doing well with hearing aids and learn of the DeafHear services"

"To get a greater understanding of hearing loss and the services available to parents. To meet other parents and children with hearing loss"

"Very well organised"

"Really fulfilled our expectations and needs"

"I found all the staff very helpful, and each of them were interested in our child and our stories"

"Found the audiogram session the best as it taught us how important the aids are to our son"

Please comment on how we met or did not meet your expectation of the weekend.

"Expectations definitely met. Informative and lovely to feel part of a group that understands"

"I found the weekend excellent. Really enjoyed it and I have taken so much from this weekend"

"I felt it was a great weekend, it was run very well and all my expectations were met. I would recommend it to any new parents of children with hearing loss"

CONCLUSION

Throughout the weekend we spoke to parents and one of the most popular comments was how they valued meeting other parents that had similar experiences at this particular time in their child's life, as they understood the emotions of diagnosis, the road to acceptance and the concern for their child's future.

With regard to the schedule for the weekend the feedback was that some sessions could be longer. Unfortunately this is very difficult to manage due to time constraints and providing a balanced timetable of information, peer support and relaxation time, all of which are necessary and hugely invaluable in creating the appropriate atmosphere for the weekend.

After reading the evaluation forms the overwhelming feedback from the parent's is that they are very thankful that this event is available. They told us that they gained a lot from the information received and meeting other parents during weekend and some felt they were now empowered in dealing with their child's hearing loss.

Parents appeared to have benefitted greatly from the weekend. They seemed to have grown in confidence, and their comments demonstrated that they felt less isolated and had enjoyed meeting and making friends with other families.

We would like to take this opportunity to say that we would not have such a successful event without the parent's being so willing to share their stories, take part in the workshops and support one another; thank you. Finally, a big thank you to the DeafHear staff who attended for all their hard work both before and throughout the weekend.

Siobhán Egan