

# Supporting Young People who are Deafblind through the SEND Education Experience

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# Introduction

## Sense

For everyone living with complex disabilities. For everyone who is deafblind. Sense is here to help people communicate and experience the world.



# Deafblindness or Multi-sensory impairment.

“Persons are regarded as deafblind if their combined sight and hearing impairment causes difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility.”

(Department of Health, 1995)

“Multi-sensory impairment (MSI) is a functional term that is frequently used alongside or interchangeably with deafblindness by educationalists, teachers and families because it communicates more effectively the impact of deafblindness.”

(NATSIP, 2012)

# A unique disability

“Deafblindness is not just a deaf person who cannot see, or a blind person who cannot hear. The two impairments together increase the effects of each.”

(Sense 2015)

- Access to information
- Communication
- Mobility

An individual experience

# The SEND experience

## What do young people with MSI/deafblindness need?

- Specialist assessment of needs to inform EHCp and plan provision and support
- Specialist support
- Skilled, responsive communication partners
- Opportunities to thrive and develop
- An appropriate, meaningful curriculum
- An adapted or modified environment
- Consistency
- A supportive social and emotional environment

*NB this list is not exhaustive and is not individualised*



# The challenges young people may face...

- Misidentification or misunderstanding of MSI
- Access to specialist support
- Access to a responsive and motivating communication environment
- Access to social experiences with skilled support
- Access to an appropriate curriculum
- Consistency

# Recognition of a unique disability

## The Code of Practice 2015

‘Schools should work closely with the local authority and other providers to agree the range of local services and clear arrangements for making appropriate requests. This might include schools commissioning specialist services directly. Such specialist services include, but are not limited to ....specialist teachers or support services, including specialist teachers with a mandatory qualification for children with hearing and vision impairment, including multi-sensory impairment, and for those with a physical disability.’ (SEND Code Parag 6.61)



## The Code of Practice 2015

‘In seeking advice and information, the local authority should consider with professionals what advice they can contribute to ensure the assessment covers all the relevant education, health and care needs of the child or young person. Advice and information **must** be sought as follows (subject to para 9.47 above): .....

If the child or young person is either vision or hearing impaired, or both(i.e. MSI) the educational advice and information **must** be given after consultation with a person who is qualified to teach pupils or students with these impairments.’ (SEND Code Parag 9.49) (i.e. QTMSI in addition to QTVI/TOD as appropriate)

## The Code of Practice 2015

‘Some children and young people require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided. These difficulties can be age related and may fluctuate over time. Many children and young people with vision impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning, or habilitation support. Children and young people with an MSI have a combination of vision and hearing difficulties. Information on how to provide services for deafblind children and young people is available through the Social Care for Deafblind Children and Adults guidance published by the Department of Health’ (SEND Code Parag 6.34)

# Care and Support for Deafblind Children and Adults

## Local Authorities are required to;

- identify, make contact with and keep a record of all Deafblind people in their catchment area (including those people who have multiple disabilities which include dual sensory impairment);
- ensure that when an assessment of needs for care and support is carried out, this is done by a person or team that has specific training and expertise relating to Deafblind persons - in particular to assess the need for communication, one-to-one human contact, social interaction and emotional wellbeing, support with mobility assistive technology and habilitation/rehabilitation;

# Care and Support for Deafblind Children and Adults

## continued;

- ensure services provided to Deafblind people are appropriate, recognising that they may not necessarily be able to benefit from mainstream services or those services aimed primarily at blind people or deaf people who are able to rely on their other senses;
- ensure that Deafblind people are able to access specifically-trained one-to-one support workers if they are assessed as requiring one;
- provide information and advice in ways which are accessible to Deafblind people; and
- ensure that a Director-level member of the local authority senior team has overall responsibility for Deafblind services.

# When needs are met.....

Young people;

- grow in confidence and independence
- develop positive interactions and relationships
- develop effective communication skills
- have good emotional well being
- progress
- have a positive sense of self

The possibilities are endless.....

*We believe that no one, no matter how complex their disabilities, should be isolated, left out, or unable to fulfil their potential (Sense)*

# References

Department of Health (1995) Think Dual Sensory

Department of Health (2014) Care and Support for Deafblind Children and Adults Policy Guidance

National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NATSIP) (2012) Raising the Achievement of Deafblind/Multi-Sensory Impaired Pupils: Effective Working with Teaching Assistants in Schools.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years January 2015

Sense (2015) About Deafblindness. Available at:

<https://www.sense.org.uk/content/about-deafblindness>)

# Contact information

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