Norfolk County Council

Virtual School Sensory Support
News update

Head of Virtual School Sensory Support

I am writing to share that, following a recruitment process, Kate Stocks has been appointed to the substantive post of Head of the Virtual School Sensory Support.

Kate will continue to provide leadership to the Virtual School Sensory Support during a critical time as we navigate a way back towards a 'new normal'. I am confident Kate will do this drawing upon her experience and insight into the needs of pupils with sensory loss, together with a wider understanding of the changes and opportunities within Inclusion and Opportunity, and across Children's Services. I am sure you will join me in congratulating Kate on this appointment.

Securing substantive leadership for the service has been a priority and I have asked Kate to look at any subsequent vacancies so that we have the capacity needed to support children and young people who require specialist teaching and advice.

Andy Tovell, Assistant Director
Inclusion and Opportunity Service

Hear, hear!

Whilst we are still predominantly working remotely, we are very pleased that essential visits have been able to resume. For us in the team for Deaf Children and Young People it means that, with rigorous risk assessment and appropriate caution, we can make some visits to settings and homes to offer face to face support in meeting hearing needs. Amongst other things, this has meant that we have been able to fit some more radio aid systems and maintain existing systems already on loan.

A radio aid system is an amazing listening device which transmits a person's voice directly to a deaf child or young person's hearing aids or cochlear implants. This makes a huge difference for many deaf children and young people, especially in situations when it’s difficult to hear and listen, such as when:

• There is background noise.
• There is a distance between the person speaking and the deaf child or young person.
• Sounds are bouncing off hard surfaces around the room (also known as reverberation) leading to distortion of sound or echo.

So, your average classroom, or even home!

A radio aid system consists of a transmitter, worn by the person speaking (such as a parent/carer, teacher or support staff) and a receiver, worn by the child or young person. Receivers attach onto hearing aids or speech processors. Or, with the latest technology, the receiver software is simply installed into the newest generation of hearing aids.

The radio aid makes the sound your child needs to hear, such as the teacher's voice, clearer in relation to unwanted background noises. They are used widely in education. They can also help children to develop language before they start school; and can be a useful tool in everyday life at all ages. They are completely portable and can be used outside for sports etc., in cars, on bike rides…

As if that wasn't brilliant enough, they can also be connected to devices via headphone sockets. In schools this means they can be connected to class smartboards, laptops, tablets, etc. For home learning they have proved invaluable for deaf children and young people logging into lessons online etc. For downtime they can be connected to phones and used to listen to calls, music or video wirelessly. The transmitter is connected to the device being used, and the audio is transmitted directly to the receivers on/in the hearing aids or cochlear implants. Those of us in the team who have a radio aid also use them in this way; they have allowed us to access all the video meetings!

VSSS can loan radio aids to deaf children and young people on our caseload who meet the criteria (a certain level of deafness and being an established hearing aid or cochlear implant user), subject to availability. Whilst they are loaned as an educational tool; home use is also encouraged; we never stop learning! We just ask that you take very good care of them and, if applicable, make sure they arrive at school every day with sufficient charge.

If your child already has a radio aid system on loan from us and you would like to know more about how to utilise it, or if you think your child might benefit from the loan of a system, please contact your Teacher of the Deaf.

Tactile cone on pedestrian crossings

Did you know about the tactile cone on pedestrian crossings?

As you may or may not be aware, not all pedestrian crossings beep for vision impaired or blind people - especially those that are situated in busy places where there may be two or more crossings. This is because an individual could get confused about which crossing is beeping and cross at the wrong time.

Therefore, a ridged cone has been designed to support individuals who struggle to see the green light and the traffic. **The cone is situated underneath the yellow box (normally on the right-hand side if there is two), hidden away, and spins, indicating when the green man lights up and it's your turn to cross.** It is important to note that individuals must combine this information with listening to the traffic on the road.

The cone also helps deaf-blind people too, as they can't hear the beep.

So, the next time you're at a pedestrian crossing - take a look under the box and see if you can find the tactile spinning cone!