

# Sensory Questionnaire

## Sense of Hearing

Greater Glasgow and Clyde



This series of Sensory Questionnaires are designed to enable you to support your child's progress at particular stages of sensory development.

### **YOUR SENSE OF HEARING**

Listening to the world around us helps us make sense of where we are. Some children can be very sensitive to sound and can react badly to sudden loud noises. This is very common and is part of normal development, however some children can remain sensitive to sound for much longer than others.

If you suspect your child does not process auditory information as well as they should please complete the following questionnaire and then try using the downloadable strategies to help them.

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## Question 1 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

### Question 1

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**Does your child show distress at sudden or unexpected loud noises, compared to other children the same age?**

*If your child becomes agitated, starts to cry or covers their ears when they hear a sudden or unexpected loud noise then try the following strategies:*

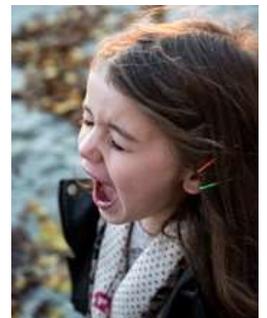


### Strategies and Suggestions

Children who are sensitive to noise might get upset with sounds that do not upset you, or even with sounds you are oblivious to, so this is worth considering if your child becomes distressed for no apparent reason.

If necessary, try to avoid extremely noisy situations that cause your child great distress. This can provide a short term fix, and as your child becomes older they may be more able to cope with that particular environment.

- Warn your child if possible that a loud noise is going to happen.
- Visual symbols may be helpful to prepare them in certain situations e.g. before a test fire alarm.
- Give warnings ahead of time if you are approaching a place or situation where there will be more noise.
- If you know your child is sensitive to certain sounds allow them to move away from the noise or use headphones/earphones before the noise happens for a short period of time with clear adult support/direction.
- Strategies such as visual supports i.e. symbols/timetables may be helpful to help prepare your child.
- Reduce background noise at home or nursery if at all possible. Sometimes, if the noise is one you cannot control (for example the hum of the central heating system or the whirr of your fridge freezer) playing music quietly in the background will 'drown' out the noise.
- Shut doors or windows to reduce external noise.
- Identifying the loud noise through visual and verbal labelling can be reassuring e.g. "wow it's the balloon, look!"





## Question 1 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

- Encourage your child to play with the object that makes the noise they are wary of, or at the very least encourage them to watch you play with it. Create fun games like blowing up the balloon and letting it go, releasing a small squeaky bit of air out, or allowing the child to stay in control by stamping or using a cocktail stick to pop the balloons.





## Question 2 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

### Question 2

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#### Does your child hold their hands over their ears to protect ears from sound?

*Some children dislike certain frequencies or sounds such as cutlery against china dinner plates, or chalk against a blackboard. The noise may not be loud, in fact you may not even have noticed it, but if it causes a different response in your child than it does in other children then they are probably sensitive to sound. If your child does not become obviously upset but covers their ears at certain sounds then still try the following strategies:*

#### Strategies and Suggestions

When your child covers their ears they are probably hearing a noise that they don't like. Help your child to find out what it is and don't try to stop them from covering their ears until it has stopped or can move away from the noise. It will upset your child at this time so let them calm down before you explain what the noise is.

- Warn the child if the noise will happen again.
- Certain situations such as busy shops, may be more of a trigger; it may be best to visit such venues at quieter times.
- In places where your child regularly spends time i.e. nursery and home, consider the furnishing; soft surfaces absorb sound and hard surfaces reflect sound. Placing a rug on a laminate floor will help reduce clatter and echo, as well as softening the general sounds in a room.





## Question 3 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

### Question 3

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**Does your child not appear to hear certain sounds, or doesn't respond when their name is called, but you know that their hearing is ok?**

*A few children have a reduced range of frequencies that they are able to hear so if a noise is too low or too high a child might miss it. If this is the case it is always worth having an Audiologist check out your child's hearing.*

*Some children seem unaware when they are being spoken to. You might say your child's name and not get a response from them even though you know they can hear perfectly well. This can happen if they are engrossed in an activity they really love, or because they know you are about to tell them to go to bed or tidy up. That is perfectly normal! If however it happens across lots of different settings then try the following strategy:*



### Strategies and Suggestions

- Get your child's full attention before telling them an instruction or action. Be aware they might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision and getting eye contact (if this is tolerated) will help your child focus.





## Question 4 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

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**Does your child seem disturbed or intensely interested in sounds not usually noticed by other people?**

*Some children can hear noises that the rest of us are oblivious to such as the hum of the traffic outside, other children's pencils or crayons rubbing on the paper, the noise of the central heating system as they are trying to fall asleep etc. These can also include the noise from strip lights, the noise of the central heating system or the high frequency sounds emitted by computers or TV digiboxes. Children can have difficulty filtering these noises out and ignoring them and this can prove distracting when they are trying to concentrate.*



### Strategies and Suggestions

A child might look distracted or become irritable if they need to concentrate but can't because of all the background noise they are hearing and trying to process, whilst also trying to pay attention to what the parent or nursery teacher is saying.

- Try using ear defenders when you want the child to focus on a certain activity such as doing a jigsaw or looking at a book. Ear plugs and headphones can also help.
- Some children can concentrate better when they are listening to music. Playing music quietly in the background can reduce the irritation caused by the 'white noise' of electrical appliances or strip lighting.
- Allow your child to listen to music quietly using any device (i.e. iPod or MP3) and ear phones.





## Question 5 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

### Question 5

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#### Does your child make noises, hum, sing or scream unexpectedly?

*Some children generate their own noise in an attempt to 'drown out' the sounds they cannot control. This can include making noises 'internally' for example using their mouth and throat to hum, or making noises 'externally' by repeatedly flushing a toilet, playing a musical toy over and over again, or constantly pressing the same button on an interactive toy.*



#### Strategies and Suggestions

- Check that overhead strip or strobe lighting isn't buzzing as some children can hear very slight noises and become distracted or distressed by them.
- Ensure one adult at a time is talking to the child, as your child may just be trying to drown out too many sounds coming in at one time and have difficulty processing them all.
- Too many sounds and thoughts are happening at too fast a speed in order for the child to process the sounds effectively (they have a noisy brain!) Use a distraction free area and reduce unnecessary sounds i.e. turn off the T.V. and any overhead lighting, then start again.





## Question 6 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

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#### Does your child have difficulty paying attention?

*There are many reasons why children struggle to pay attention and processing sound is only one of them. Young children have a limited attention span at the best of times, but if you feel your child is particularly distractible try the following ideas:*



#### Strategies and Suggestions

- Think about the noises your child might be distracted by when you are asking them to sit still and focus. If you can reduce the background noise for the child this will help them focus.
- Use play or songs to catch your child's attention so they want to listen. Movement actually helps improve concentration so allowing a child plenty opportunities to move before expecting them to sit still can help.
- Let your child hold something in their hand; playing with a fidget toy can also help concentration.
- Get the child's full attention before you tell him/her the instruction or action. Be aware the child might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision (and getting eye contact with the child) will help them focus.
- Having visual cue-cards of photos or pictures that are relevant to their daily routine may help.
- Getting the right amount of sleep can have a big effect on attention.





## Question 7 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

### Question 7

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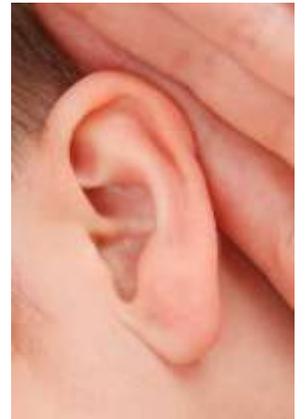
#### Does your child find it difficult to determine the location of sounds or voices?

*If you are standing in the kitchen and calling out for your child who is sitting next door in the living room, and your child has to ask where you are before they can come and find you, then their sense of direction for the source of sound is not working properly and you should try the following:*



#### Strategies and Suggestions

- Ensure there isn't a hearing impairment by having a routine check with an audiologist.
- Often children who seem oblivious to the source of a sound are tuning into something they find far more interesting. Try using exaggerated expression and higher tone to draw your child's attention to the sound of your voice.
- Play games that allow your child to develop their sense of sound direction e.g. when sitting together and you hear (but cannot see) a dog bark or a bus drive past ask your child where the sound is coming from.





## Question 8 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

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**Does your child like to cause certain sounds to happen over and over such as repeatedly flushing the toilet or repeatedly operating a musical toy?**

*Some children really enjoy certain sounds and will make them over and over to the point of distraction. Whilst this can appear quite cute when a child is 2 years old, it can be extremely irritating to others if they are still doing it at the age of 10 years old. If your child falls into this category please try the following:*



### Strategies and Suggestions

A child who likes to create the same sounds over and over again can do so for one of several reasons; they like the sound and enjoy controlling it, they are trying to drown out other noises they don't like and can't control, they are stimulated by hearing the sound and enjoy repeating the pleasurable sensation, or they know it will annoy you!

- If you feel that your child produces this noise in times of stress, or to drown out other noises they can't control, try playing music through headphones to them instead.
- Give them clear boundaries around when they can make their favourite noises and how often they can repeat them. Use visual countdowns such as egg timers or stop watches to help them if they need this.
- Although this is annoying for you it makes the child feel happy and they are unlikely to want to stop. They may need your support to help them stop and move on from the game/activity.
- Be firm and be consistent. This will help them to learn to stop and move on to another task or activity, and gradually they will understand the rules.
- Allow the child opportunities at various points during the day to make their favourite noises; given them a couple of choices and use a timer to show how long they can play with their chosen toy or activity.
- Use an egg/visual timer to show the child that an activity is soon going to finish to encourage the child to stop pressing sound toys over and over again. Limit the sound before it over-stimulates the child.

