Welcome to B&NES and Wiltshire Children’s Community Audiology Services

Our community based service provides hearing assessment for any child referred aged from birth to 16 years, and any child with a permanent hearing impairment requiring monitoring of hearing and communication development. We can also see children up to 19 years old if they have Special Educational Needs.

We can see any child whose family doctor is in Bath & North East Somerset, Frome and Shepton Mallet in East Mendip and the towns and villages of North and West Wiltshire (Malmesbury to Warminster and Bradford on Avon across to Devizes).

What we do

The service offers assessment for any child whose parents or health and educational professionals are concerned about their hearing. We provide hearing assessments for children, using techniques that are age and developmentally appropriate. We have modern facilities at St Martin’s Hospital on the south side of Bath that include specialist equipment for testing children under the age of 2 and a half.

Many of the children that we see have a temporary hearing loss caused by congestion behind the eardrums (“glue ear”). We can monitor the hearing of these children and refer on for intervention if necessary. We also provide specialist care for children with permanent hearing loss. These children are seen regularly for monitoring and hearing aid support. Our specialist paediatric audiologists meet with Hearing Support teachers from the Sensory Support services and paediatric audiologists from the Royal United Hospital Bath, at the St Martin’s Hospital clinic.

Many of our children are first seen as babies, because a hearing concern was picked up by the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme. For other children, a hearing problem becomes apparent when seen in clinic as an older child. We are very happy to see children with known hearing loss, with or without hearing aids, and children with tinnitus. We are also pleased to support children with permanent hearing loss who have moved in to the area from another audiology service.
How do I access this service?
Written referrals (via letter or email) can be made by:
- GP
- Health Visitor
- School Nurse
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Paediatrician (community or hospital based)
- Other health or education professional

A parent/guardian having any difficulty accessing our service, can get in touch with us directly to discuss arranging a referral.

Your child’s appointment at Children’s Audiology

How you can help prepare your child for their visit to Children’s Audiology.

- **Explain** to your child that they are going to have their hearing checked and will be playing some listening games
- **Encourage** your child to become familiar with headphones if you have any at home. It is helpful to practice putting them on with your child if they are happy to do so
- **Arrange** to attend without siblings where possible or to bring another adult with you if possible to look after siblings in the waiting area whilst your child is being tested
- **Avoid** bringing your child if they are poorly (e.g. with a very heavy cold, contagious illness such as chickenpox or a sickness bug). Please get in touch to cancel and rearrange their hearing test. Food and drink should not be brought into the test rooms. Also, if possible your child should take their dummy or soother out. Please switch all mobile phones off.
- **Allow** plenty of time for travelling to the hospital and parking if you are driving. If you are late for your appointment, we may have to rearrange it and see you on another date
- **Advise** us before your appointment date if you are unable to attend or if you need an interpreter or any special assistance for your child’s appointment.

Before we assess your child’s hearing we will ask you some questions about your child, including:

- Concerns you may have about their hearing or speech
- Your child’s responses to sound
- Your child’s understanding of speech and speech development.
- Your child’s general development and health
- Any family history of hearing loss.

Measuring your child’s hearing

We use a range of hearing tests and will decide which ones to use depending on your child’s age, development, and the type of concerns raised about their hearing.

Young babies are often tested whilst they are sleeping - if we would like your child to be asleep for their hearing test we will explain this in your appointment letter. Once a child is 8 months old, we usually like them to be awake and alert for their appointment. We can generally test them by looking at their reactions to sounds or playing a game with sounds.

The hearing tests measure how the different parts of the ear (outer, middle and inner ear) respond to sound. The response to sound is measured at different frequencies (pitches).
We may use different methods such as loudspeakers, headphones and a bone vibrating headphone to measure your child’s hearing. For more information about hearing tests for babies and children please ask a member of our team for details.

What happens next?
At the end of the appointment we will discuss the results with you and a care plan for your child will be agreed. We will give you time to ask questions. Please let us know if you would like a copy of your child’s hearing test results or care plan.

- **Discharge.** If your child’s hearing is satisfactory, they will be discharged
- **Recall.** If we haven’t been able to get enough information in one session, we may arrange another appointment to get more information
- **Review.** If your child has a hearing loss caused by congestion (glue ear or otitis media with effusion) we will discuss this with you and arrange to review their hearing and discuss management options. We may refer your child to the Ear, Nose Throat Department at the Royal United Hospital
- **Monitor.** If your child has a permanent hearing loss, we will discuss this with you and arrange to regularly check their hearing and communication development. We will discuss different management options with you including hearing aids. With your permission, we may refer your child to a Hearing Support teacher who will be able to provide information about communication options including sign language and support in nursery and school. We may also refer your child to a Paediatrician to discuss possible causes of hearing loss.

For more information about causes of hearing loss and management of hearing loss for babies and children please ask a member of our team for details.

About us
A team of specialist paediatric audiologists and experienced clinical support staff will assess and care for your child, supported by our administrative team.

Our commitment to your child
Virgin Care takes your dignity and privacy very seriously and we will always respect your confidentiality. Please treat our staff with respect so we can provide you with the very best care we can. Any information held about your child is kept securely in a file or on electronic information systems. We use the information to:

- Record important health and social care information
- Help professionals to care for your child
- Provide appropriate support and care to children, young people and families
- Develop and improve services and measure how well we are doing.

We will only share information about a child/young person with your consent unless required by law or the data is anonymised. However, in some circumstances, when we feel that your child or others are at risk, we may share information without consent.
Your opinion really matters to us

We hope this leaflet covers all you need to know about our service. Please let us know if you have a comment, a compliment or a complaint by filling out one of our feedback forms or telling a member of the team. If you have any questions or queries, please get in touch.

Non-English speakers and other formats

We provide all our leaflets in other languages and formats. Please let us know if you would like a different format or language.

Your child’s records

We record all of the information about your child confidentially on our clinical system. Keeping healthcare records is important as they help to:

- Record important clinical information
- Help health professionals to care for your child
- Improve public health and the services provided to your child

Would you recommend us?

You can help shape your service by taking part in the Friends and Family Test. Tell us what was good or what could be improved about your recent visit to our service. We will take on board your comments and suggestions by making the necessary changes to make your next visit as pleasant and comfortable. You can provide feedback by free text message, on a paper form or online. For further information please go to www.virgincare.co.uk/feedback or speak to our staff at our service for details.

What if I have a concern?

We are committed to providing you with the best service possible. We are always looking for ways to improve the service and would like to hear your comments, compliments or complaints.

If you would like to make a complaint, please speak to a member of the team caring you in the first instance. Alternatively, you can speak to our Customer Experience Team by calling 0300 303 9509 or writing to

Virgin Care Customer Experience
Farnham Hospital
Hale Road
Farnham GU9 9QL

The full complaints process is in our Customer Experience: Here to help leaflet and is also online at www.virgincare.co.uk/complaints/.

If you would like any help, please speak to a member of staff in the service.
Opening times

Usual opening hours:

- Monday  8am-4pm
- Tuesday  8am-4pm
- Wednesday 8am-4pm
- Thursday 8am-4pm
- Friday   8am-4pm
Get in touch
Room 17, Ground Floor
Midford House
St Martin’s Hospital
Kempthorne Lane
Bath BA2 5RP

**t:** 01225 731 640 **e:** vcl.bathneswiltschildrensaudiology@nhs.net
**w:** www.virgincare.co.uk/vc-providers/15489/