

Advice Sheet for Educational Staff Supporting Children and Young People with Deafblindness (Multi-Sensory Impairment)

Children and young people with deafblindness experience the world in reduced and unique ways. The guidance below supports their learning, communication, and wellbeing.

Build Trust and Relationships

- Work close so the child or young person can recognise you through touch, smell, warmth, or remaining sight/hearing.
- Keep staff consistent and few.
- Use clear personal identifiers (e.g. a bracelet or greeting routine).
- Notice and respond to small communication cues (e.g. breathing, movement).
- Always tell the child or young person when you arrive and before you leave.

Be Consistent and Predictable

- Keep routines the same to help understanding.
- Do daily activities in the same way, place, and order.
- Use consistent objects, cues, and staff.
- Keep the environment stable—avoid moving furniture or leaving hazards.
- Only introduce change once routines are understood.

Support Understanding and Communication

- Explain what is happening and what comes next using accessible methods.
- Use consistent cues (objects, touch, signs, or sounds).
- Provide hands-on experiences with guided support (e.g. hand-under-hand).
- Follow the child or young person's preferred communication (speech, signing, objects, tactile systems).

Allow Extra Time

- Processing takes longer with limited senses.
- Give extra time and don't rush.
- Keep all routine steps—skipping a step causes confusion.
- Use pauses and a slower pace.

Follow the Child or Young Person's Lead

- Offer choice and control where possible.

- Be aware they may notice subtle sensory input (e.g. vibrations).
- Observe behaviour to understand interests and responses.
- Respect signals to continue, stop, or change.
- Offer meaningful choices.

Provide Emotional and Sensory Support

- Deafblindness can lead to isolation, anxiety, or frustration.
- Behaviour may reflect overload or unpredictability.
- Allow frequent breaks—using limited senses is tiring.
- Adapt activities to be accessible and enjoyable.
- Support relaxation in ways that suit the child or young person.

Key Reminder

Children and young people with deafblindness need time, consistency, and sensitive support. Your role is to make learning predictable, accessible, and responsive so they feel safe, understood, and confident.