



Working with Children and Young People with Auditory Processing Difficulties in Buckinghamshire Local Area Position Statement December 2022

This position paper draws upon a review of the research evidence and represents the views of Education, Health and Social Care providers and commissioners within the Buckinghamshire Local Area. It is aimed at practitioners supporting children and young people who are experiencing difficulties in auditory processing and its purpose is to improve consistency of approach amongst professionals and reduce the uncertainty for families.

What is Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)?

Auditory Processing Disorder refers to difficulty with listening and processing what we hear. This has an impact on everyday life and may include difficulties understanding both speech and environmental sounds. It is not a form of hearing loss, despite showing difficulty with hearing-related tasks.

The processing of sound by the ear and nerve pathways between the ear and the brain is highly complex. Recent research shows that the brain can influence the way incoming sounds are processed. So, it's a two-way process and it all happens very quickly.

Other factors can also affect the way we process sound such as our language ability, memory, and attention. This is because even a simple task like following the instructions of a teacher requires that all these different abilities work together. As a result, APD often co-occurs with other childhood developmental delays such as language, attention, and memory difficulties, as well as dyslexia and autism. APD is thus a complex disorder and is different in each child¹.

The child/young person with APD usually has normal levels of hearing.

What are the key difficulties associated with APD?

- Listening in noisy and reverberant environments
- Localising and 'tracking' moving sounds
- Understanding speech when the signal is degraded in some way (e.g., when spoken in an accent, or heard on a mobile telephone)
- Poor listening and attention skills
- 'Mishearing' auditory information
- Taking longer to respond to and process auditory information

¹ [APD-Leaflet-May-2015-3.pdf \(thebsa.org.uk\)](https://thebsa.org.uk/APD-Leaflet-May-2015-3.pdf)

Additionally, in children there may also be reports of:

- Delayed auditory milestones in early childhood, (e.g., difficulty learning songs and nursery rhymes)
- Difficulty with auditory memory and multiple auditory commands
- Speech and language delay or disorder
- Difficulties with academic progress, especially concerning reading and spelling

How is APD identified and assessed?

The child should first have a hearing test completed. Hearing is checked routinely as part of developmental checks, but if there are additional concerns a further check can be requested through the school nurse or GP (General Practitioners). A routine hearing test should be completed within 3 months of referral to a specialist clinic. Hearing loss and glue ear must be ruled out first and grommets should not be in place. Glue ear needs to be treated before testing can take place and any other suspected conditions and speech and language issues should be diagnosed before a referral. If the hearing test shows no hearing loss / glue ear, then parents/carers can request a referral from a GP, paediatrician or audiologist stating in their report that APD is suspected.

A child with auditory processing disorder will usually not show a hearing loss on standard testing. Further tests are required to identify an auditory processing disorder. There are very few clinics in the UK offering this assessment and each has additional referral criteria. Funding will need to be agreed by the local integrated commissioning board and will need to be demonstrated as an exceptional need².

[Audio-vestibular Medicine \(paediatrics, children and young people\) : University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust \(uclh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/auditory-vestibular-medicine)

[Auditory processing disorder | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/auditory-processing-disorder)

At no point in the referral process outlined above is the child/young person referred to the Hearing Support Specialist Teachers. As the child/young person has not been diagnosed with a hearing loss, and hearing aids have not been issued, a referral to such a team is unlikely to have taken place. Information about the diagnosis would be passed to the school.

How is APD treated or managed?

Although there is no 'cure' for APD, there are strategies and techniques which can be implemented to help the pupil at home and in school. These include:

In School or college setting

- The child/young person should sit near the front of the classroom.
- Face the child/young person when speaking so that they can read your lips and body language.
- The teacher or classroom assistant could be asked to check the pupil has heard and understood the instructions. This can be done through open questions and by getting the pupil to repeat back instructions.
- Be concise and direct - avoid long verbal instructions.
- Use visual clues e.g., pictures, objects, and visual demonstrations, when appropriate.

² [Will the NHS pay for my treatment? | BOB ICB](#)

- For older pupils, the teacher could be asked to provide written information which might be used to consolidate verbal instructions.
- Have aims and objectives clearly displayed so the pupil can see the framework of the lesson.
- In group work, try to locate the child/young person's group in a quiet area, or preferably in another room.
- Provide regular pauses during the lesson to recap and revisit the main points.
- Allow time for processing of information and replies.
- Support children and young people to develop independent strategies.
- Listening is hard for a child/young person who has APD. As the lesson progresses, and towards the end of the day, increasing levels of tiredness may result in a range of off-task behaviours.
- Reducing classroom noise for example more soft furnishings, rubber feet on table and chair legs
- Consider sources of background noise, including noisy heaters and interactive whiteboard projector fans. Seating away from these sources is advised.
- Keep doors and windows closed to exclude background noise
- Trial of an Assistive Listening Device. Assistive listening devices could be recommended to make speech clearer in noise, for example, a soundfield system in the main classroom or a personal system. Settings will need to provide and maintain assistive equipment.

At home

- Making sure your child is looking at you when you are talking to them.
- Asking your child to repeat instructions so that you know he or she has heard what you said or ask the child to repeat in their own words.
- Reducing background noise in the house, especially the radio, and the television, which presents a considerable distraction due to the noise and pictures.
- Making sure your child/young person has a quiet area to do their homework where there are no distractions.
- Providing lots of positive support and encouragement so that your child retains a strong self-image.
- Being aware that your child may be experiencing high levels of frustration as they try to cope with the confusing messages they receive.

What is auditory integration therapy, and will it help?

Auditory integration therapy was developed as a technique for improving abnormal sound sensitivity in individuals with behavioural disorders including autism spectrum disorders. Other sound therapies bearing similarities to auditory integration therapy include the Tomatis Method and Samonas Sound Therapy. The Practice Guidance current management of APD published by the BSA in 2011³ indicates no or very little evidence or conflicting expert opinion to the efficacy of this approach. The later guidance supplementing this and produced in 2018 indicates a lack of evidence as to the transfer of benefit or learning to real world tasks or settings⁴.

³ [Position Statement and Practice Guidance 2011 Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\)](#)

⁴ [Position Statement and Practice Guidance 2018 Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\)](#)

Who can provide advice/support in Buckinghamshire?

Buckinghamshire Hearing Support Specialist Teachers: do not currently provide direct support for children and young people who have APD and normal levels of hearing. If a deaf child also has diagnosed APD, the service is able to provide their usual levels of support.

The service can pass on information on APD and how to support pupils who have a diagnosis of APD including providing information about assistive listening devices and signposting to providers.

The Buckinghamshire Speech and Language Therapy Service within Children and Young People's Integrated Therapies (CYPIT): can offer advice on techniques to help children with APD and other conditions that affect listening, attention, and language processing. This includes discussion of environmental changes: using visuals, chunking of information, and encouraging all children to monitor their understanding and ask for help. It can also include advice on teaching strategies for supporting auditory memory such as visualising or repeating instructions, using notes as aids, and other visual supports. Some children may benefit from targeted work, carried out by education staff, on practising auditory memory strategies.

For information on how to access advice from a speech and language therapist, please see the [CYPIT website](#).

Resources reviewed

[Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\) in Children: Guide | MESHGuides](#)

[Auditory processing disorder \(APD\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[APD and childhood deafness | APD and deafness support \(ndcs.org.uk\)](#)

British Society of Audiology (BSA) [Position Statement and Practice Guidance 2018 Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\)](#)

BSA [Position Statement and Practice Guidance 2011 Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\)](#)

BSA [APD-Leaflet-May-2015-3.pdf \(thebsa.org.uk\)](#)

[NatSIP National Framework for the Local Offer \(batod.org.uk\)](#) National Sensory Impairment Partnership

[Auditory processing disorder | Great Ormond Street Hospital \(gosh.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Audio-vestibular Medicine \(paediatrics, children and young people\) : University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust \(uclh.nhs.uk\)](#)

[APD Support UK](#)

[Auditory integration training and other sound therapies for autism spectrum disorders \(ASD\) - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)