

**Children's Sensory Team (CST)
Newsletter
Summer Term 1 - April 2020**

**Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People
with Vision Impairment and/or Hearing Impairment**

Covid-19

While Covid-19 is playing a big part in everyone's life, CST's activities which would involve face to face contact with schools and families have been postponed, however, CST teachers are still available via their email or work mobiles. Below is some information you may find helpful. For specific information regarding the needs of your child please contact their CST teacher.

The following online books help to explain Covid-19 to young children:

<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

<https://nursedottybooks.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/dave-the-dog-coronavirus-1-1.pdf>

Parent Events

As with other services, the parent courses have been postponed for the time being.

Pre-school Sensory Group

Activities using 'messy play', music and singing can still take place at home.

Maybe you could try:

- **Sensory play** - fill a shallow bowl with water. Add something to the water while your child is watching – you could try washing up liquid or a drop of food colour or washable paint. Drop objects into the water with 'ready, steady, go' or '1...2...3...go!', or support your child to feel the water and use vocabulary such as 'splash, splash, splash', 'whoosh' etc.
- **Music making** - explore different sounds in the home; e.g. banging saucepans with metal/ wooden or plastic spoons. Use clean dry empty milk cartons and fill with objects that will rattle (use large objects that cannot be swallowed or broken, e.g. a tea spoon in a plastic bottle will still make a noise). Secure the lid tightly (adding tape if necessary). Use as a shaker.
- **Singing** - Sing a familiar song, but pause at the chorus or a significant part of the song and wait for your child to anticipate the next word.
Musical statues- start to dance then stop when the music stops.

Hearing Impairment

Supporting work at home:

- Use subtitles if available.
- Ask your child to use their Assistive Listening Device if they have one. It might be a good time to support your child to learn one or two steps to taking responsibility for this. Encourage your child to keep things in the same place all the time – maybe provide a drawer or involve your child in decorating a box or a ‘mat’ to place equipment in / on.
- The ALD can be cleaned in the same way as a mobile phone if needed. Any moisture entering the device could result in damage.
- Depending on ability, encourage your child to start to take responsibility for their own equipment,
 - Learn how to remove/ replace ear moulds independently
 - Learn how to clean their ear moulds.
 - Encourage them to clean the moulds as part of a regular routine.

The NDCS has a website which will offer suggestions for supporting children and young people at home.

<https://www.ndcs.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-support-for-deaf-children/>

Vision Impairment

Supporting work at home:

- Set up accessibility options on your computer / tablet if possible. An information sheet can be emailed to you.
- Ensure that your child’s low vision aids (magnifiers etc.) are easily accessible.
- Depending on ability, encourage your child to start to take responsibility for their own equipment:
 - Encourage your child to keep things in the same place all the time – maybe provide a drawer or involve your child in decorating a box or a ‘mat’ to place equipment in / on.
- Outline pictures or items to cut out in thick bold pen.
- Free audio books are available from some websites. Please note CST cannot take responsibility for parents downloading these, or the content of the book.
 - David Walliams – 30 days of free stories – on his website.
 - Story Nory - <https://www.stornory.com>
- Doorway online has some useful and visually accessible learning activities, including touch typing - <https://www.doorwayonline.org.uk/>

The RNIB has a website which will offer suggestions for supporting children and young people at home.

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/advice/children-young-people-education>

Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)

Sense (charity for people with MSI and / or complex disability) have published a ‘play toolkit’ <https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/support-for-children/play-toolkits/>

Complex Needs

Check your child's school website for information regarding support for learning at home. The following ideas for tactile learning might be helpful:

- Use a plastic, non-breakable plate as a drum. Use your hand over their hand to encourage banging, or place your child's hand on top of the plate while you tap underneath it (so your child can experience the vibration). Pause and observe your child for a response. Give them time to respond.
- Explore different textures with your child. If they require support, use your hand under their hand to guide their hand to the texture (e.g. a piece of soft material / scrunchy material), then gradually slide your hand out or support your child to use the tips of their fingers on the texture while you move your hand.
 - Some children may prefer to feel textures on the backs of their hands or using their feet.
 - Movement is required to feel the sensation of touch.
 - Observe your child's facial expressions for their response.
- Depending on your child and their needs, allow your child to feel your hand movements while you are doing activities e.g. mixing; splashing or scooping water in a bowl/bath, shaking a toy.

Vision stimulation

There are apps available for iPad / tablets to help support vision stimulation and /or motivation to look. Due to the range of devices available it is difficult to specify apps, however, searching for the following might be helpful:

- look for high contrast (e.g. black on white) shapes and pictures, preferably with movement.
- light drawing / doodles / fireworks— these apps often react with bright colours / music when the screen is touched.
- The 'helpkidzlearn' website <https://www.helpkidzlearn.com/updates/school-closure.html> has a number of free games and activities which are touch / switch accessible. It is necessary to register first.

CST cannot take responsibility for downloading apps or their content.

Post 16

The annual 'Next Steps' event was postponed due to Covid-19 but it is hoped it will be held again in the future.

The following counselling support is available by phone / online for students concerned about the virus, school, family, careers etc.

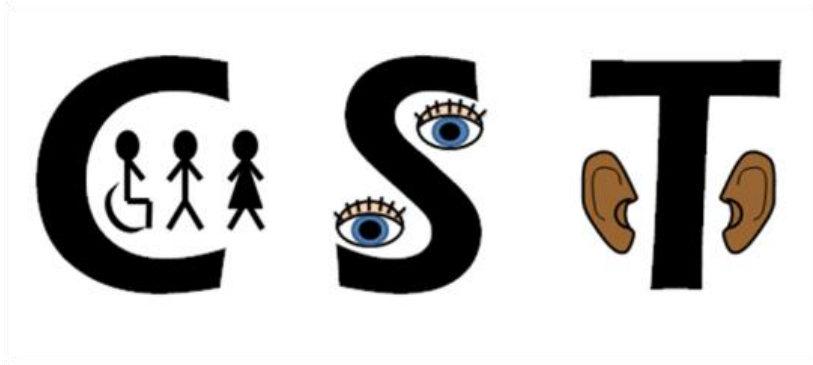
<https://student.kooth.com/index.html>

Remember - we are here to help!

Contact your allocated CST teacher or

Helen.forbes-low@harrow.gov.uk (Team Manager)

Mandy.Devine@harrow.gov.uk (Professional Lead for Children with Hearing Impairment)



Go to Harrow Council's Local Offer to find out more www.harrow.gov.uk/cst