

## The Children's Sensory Team (CST) Language and Inclusion Policy Update

### Introduction

After a long period of consultation and discussion around the language we use and our ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive and positive environment for the children and young people we work with, we are changing the language we use to reflect this ethos.

### Rationale for Language Change

The terms 'impaired,' 'impairment,' 'difficulties,' or 'loss' can carry negative connotations that do not align with empowerment, pride in who we are, and positive self-advocacy or self-esteem. Our goal is to use language that supports the empowerment and positive self-identity of the children and young people we support.

In addition to this, we have reviewed the use of capitalisation of the term Deaf. For example:

- 'deaf': This term describes a physical condition characterised by a reduced hearing level.
- 'Deaf': This term describes individuals who are culturally Deaf, meaning they are part of the Deaf community and often share a common language (like British Sign Language) and cultural values.
- Overlap: It's important to note that an individual can be "deaf" without being part of the "Deaf" community, and conversely, someone can be "Deaf" but not have a significant hearing need. For example, children of Deaf adults (CODAs) may be hearing but still part of the Deaf community.

### New Terminology

The CST will now be using the terms 'deafness', 'deaf', 'hearing needs', 'blind', 'vision needs', 'deafblind' and 'multi-sensory needs.' This shift is in line with a more inclusive approach.

The CST has committed to using inclusive language with children and young people who are blind or have significant vision needs e.g. 'Come and look at this?' or 'Did you see a TV programme last night?' even if they use a tactile and/or auditory approach to their learning and the world around them. This is aimed at fostering a sense of belonging and shared language with their sighted peers.

### Personal Preferences

We appreciate that the language we use to describe ourselves is individual and personal. Therefore, it is important to listen to children, young people, and their families who wish to further personalise how they want to describe themselves and their needs are listened to. Equally, others may want to stick with words like

'impairment' or 'Deaf' or may not have a preference. The CST will do its best to include individual choices in our communication and reports.

### **Updated Role Titles**

We are also updating the CST teachers' role titles to 'Advisory Teacher – Deaf and Hearing Inclusion (QToD)' and 'Advisory Teacher – Blind and Vision Inclusion (QTVI)'. As well as updating the role title of 'Specialist Teaching Assistant – Blind and Vision Inclusion'. All other job titles are in line with this policy. This change emphasises our role in relation to inclusion and celebrates the diverse abilities and contributions of all individuals, ensuring that our language reflects respect, dignity, and a commitment to positive engagement.

### **Use of Medical Terminology**

We understand that medical diagnoses are often described with the use of medical terminology, e.g., impairment. We will continue to reference this information from other key professionals in our reports. However, our primary focus will be on using language that promotes positive identity and self-advocacy.

### **Future Considerations**

We are aware that language changes and evolves over time, so we will continue to listen to the views of others and think about the language we use as we move forward. Our commitment to inclusivity and respect for all individuals remains at the forefront.

### **Conclusion**

By adopting these changes, we aim to further develop inclusive and positive environments that respect and celebrate the diverse abilities and contributions of all individuals. We believe that the language we use plays a crucial role in shaping our community and the way we perceive ourselves and others. This policy update reflects our vision to create an environment where everyone feels valued and empowered.

### **Acknowledgements and thanks**

Thank you to the children, young people, parents, ex- students, Children's Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG), staff in the CST and other professionals who participate in our team development and policy making.

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The Children's Sensory Team – London Borough of Harrow