

## Auditory Verbal therapy: Transforming outcomes for deaf children in Wales



**What is Auditory Verbal therapy?** A specialist early intervention that supports deaf babies and children to learn to listen and talk.

**What are the benefits?** Deaf children can achieve the same level of spoken language and education outcomes as their hearing peers.

**Can everyone access Auditory Verbal therapy?** No, unfortunately 92% of deaf children in the UK who could benefit are currently unable to access Auditory Verbal therapy.

### Who is Auditory Verbal UK?

- We are an award-winning charity that supports deaf babies and children to learn to listen and speak through Auditory Verbal therapy.  
We are the only charity in Wales that provides this specialist, family centred, approach and equips parents/carers with the tools to support the development of their deaf child's speech and language.

### What is the situation in Wales?

- There are around **270 deaf children under 5 in Wales**. These children are currently falling behind their hearing peers and are at high risk of social exclusion, bullying, poor mental health and lower employment prospects.
- **There are currently no certified Auditory Verbal therapists in Wales**. To ensure that every deaf child has the opportunity to access an Auditory Verbal programme close to where they live or via telepractice, **there needs to be 12 specialist therapists in Wales**.
- AVUK provides the internationally accredited training programme in this approach and has a proven track record of training practitioners across the UK and internationally.
- AVUK is currently working with a small number of speech and language therapists and teachers of the deaf across Wales who have begun their training in this specialist approach.

It takes 3- 5 years to train in this specialist approach whilst working with deaf children. Two professionals from South Wales recently completed our foundation course (the first six months of training) and two Teachers of the Deaf based in North Wales completed our foundation course last year.



## Deaf children and their families being supported in Wales

Auditory Verbal UK currently supports three children (two families) in Wales.

Jed and Zach\*, twins from Porthcawl, are almost three years old and are both on an Auditory Verbal programme thanks to a bursary from The Moondance Foundation. Jed and Zach have profound bilateral hearing loss, which was diagnosed at birth after the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme, as well as a rare genetic condition which affects their heart. The boys were fitted with bilateral cochlear implants at the age of two, with surgery delayed by a year because of the global pandemic. Their family joined an Auditory Verbal programme at AVUK in February 2022 and are currently having monthly appointments to support the development of their listening and spoken language, and together with our Family Support Manager, we have been supporting them to access the statutory services that are available to them.

Greta\* joined an Auditory Verbal programme in early 2022, with her place also being funded by The Moondance Foundation. Greta, who is 3 and a half years old and lives in Cardiff, has profound hearing loss and had bilateral Cochlear Implant surgery in 2021 at Cardiff hospital. Since February 2022, Greta's family have been working with a certified Auditory Verbal therapist in monthly appointment to support Greta to use her technology to learn to listen and speak.

Auditory Verbal UK has supported a number of children from Wales who have now graduated from the programme.

Naasir\* from South Glamorgan was on an Auditory Verbal programme at AVUK between 2016 and 2020. Naasir has additional needs associated with executive functioning, emotional regulation, self-monitoring, organisational and planning skills. During Naasir's time on the programme, he began to close the gap between his language age and chronological age and his final Pre-School Language Scales (PLS) assessment showed he had made 10 months' total language progress over the previous 6 months. Naasir's Mum said: "AVUK is extremely knowledgeable and helpful to parents to look outside of the box... we had full care with AVUK. I really felt supported."

Lily\*, who also lived in South Glamorgan, was on the programme for 20 months between 2010 and 2011. Her first assessment on joining AVUK's family programme at the age of 3 years, showed Lily had spoken language equivalent to a child aged 2 years and 1 month. With each passing month, the gap between Lily and her typically hearing peers would have widened. However with Auditory Verbal therapy, Lily's parents were able to support accelerating Lily's spoken language development such that by 4 years old, she had a language age of 4 years and nine months, supporting her to have the same opportunities in life as her hearing peers.

\*Names have been changed.

## The situation

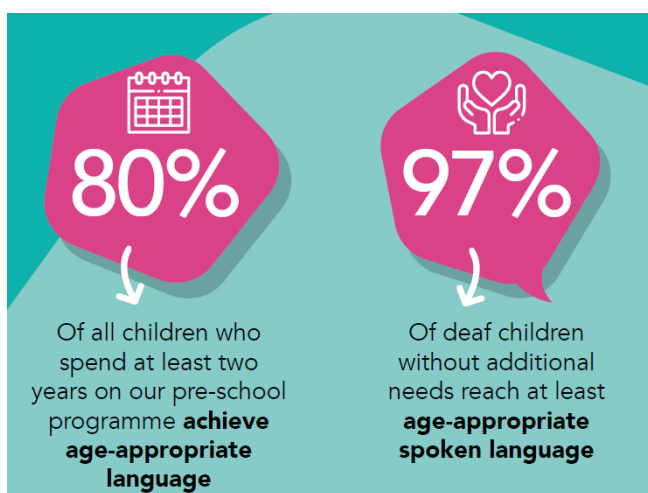
Deaf children in Wales currently face the prospect of lower academic achievement, lower employment, and are at higher risk of poor mental health, bullying and social exclusion.

But it doesn't have to be this way. When deaf children and their families have access to early and effective support opportunities are transformed. Early support should be available to all deaf children, whether their parents choose to communicate with spoken language, sign language or both.

For deaf children whose families want them to learn to listen and talk, early and effective support is vital to achieving the outcomes that we know are possible and maximise the investment already being made in newborn hearing screening and hearing technology.

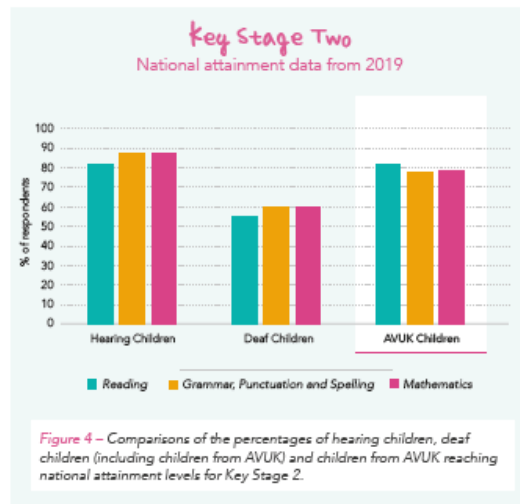
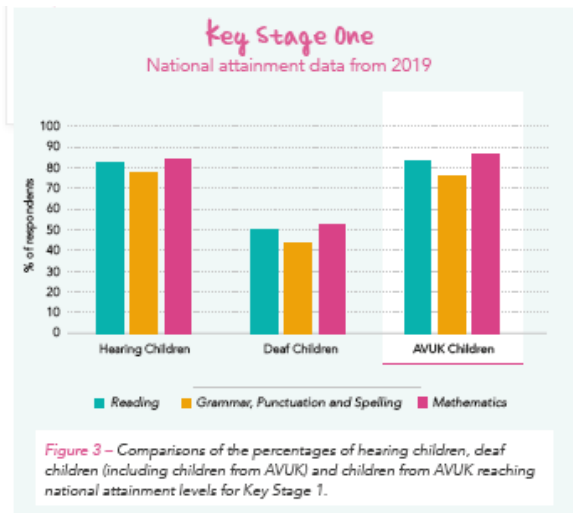
## Auditory Verbal therapy

Auditory Verbal therapy is an early intervention, family-centred coaching programme which equips parents and caregivers with the tools to support the development of their child's listening and speaking. The evidence-based specialist therapy supports deaf children process the sound they get from their hearing technology, like cochlear implants and hearing aids, to develop language so they can learn to talk like their hearing friends.



The benefits of Auditory Verbal therapy are clear. Approximately **80%** of children who attend an Auditory Verbal programme for at least two years achieve the same level of spoken language as their hearing peers, rising to **97%** of children without additional needs. The majority of these children attend mainstream schools and are attaining educational outcomes on a par with hearing children (as show in graphs below). The full return on government investment in diagnosis and hearing technology is being realised for these children. They are getting an equal start at school

and the health and education benefits are lifelong.



Watch the [‘Power of Speech’](#) event in the House of Commons, celebrating what deaf children can achieve.

The mission: it’s time to end the postcode lottery for Auditory Verbal therapy and ensure it is an option for all deaf children.

**Contact us:** To read more about AVUK, please visit: [www.avuk.org](http://www.avuk.org). If you are interested in contributing to our campaign or would like any further information, please contact Victoria Bishop-Rowe, Head of Communications and Engagement at Auditory Verbal UK, on [victoria.bishop-rowe@avuk.org](mailto:victoria.bishop-rowe@avuk.org) or call 0203 763 6490.