Skill development

To be considered for students with Usher syndrome

Don't wait – there are lots of skills which can be learnt before symptoms of vision loss occur, even before child is aware of the diagnosis if that is the family's choice. Acquiring skills empowers the child or young person by giving them access to tools and strategies to access the things which are important to them, and have a positive effect on their social and emotional wellbeing.

> *"There are skills I use everyday as an adult with Usher syndrome. I wish I'd learnt them earlier, as I spent far too long struggling and not joining in with things as a result".*
>
> *23 year old*

Skills to develop

- [ ] Learn all **shortcut keys** on computer
- [ ] **Touch typing**: Set up age-appropriate programme for CYP to learn to touch type (e.g. Typing Club or Doorway online, which is free, and has high contrast options, auditory output)
- [ ] Learn to use **accessibility functions** (e.g. adjust contrast) and **accessibility software** (e.g. screensharing)
- [ ] Learn how to use mobility cane, as and when child or young person and their family feel ready
- [ ] Sighted Guide training for family / friends of CYP, and CYP to learn skills for working with a Sighted Guide
- [ ] Road safety skills – teach skills which can adapt to changing levels of hearing / vision
- [ ] Public transport skills – in early years, encourage regular use of public transport to build familiarity and confidence. Transitioning as the young person gets older to skills enabling independent use of public transport. e.g. use of Google Maps to follow bus routes and find your stop, Trainline to find your platform, confidence to ask for help from others or people that work in the setting
- [ ] Access to learning and awareness of British Sign Language and how it can be adapted to reduced visual field. Whilst many children with Usher syndrome are able to use spoken language, awareness of signed communication supports the development of identity and community. It is also valuable to have a communication mode that can be used when hearing aids or cochlear implants are removed
- [ ] Independent living skills: learn strategies for keeping equipment / rooms tidy, returning items to set places, using easy to access labels to designate places for things
- [ ] Encourage CYP (or family) to apply for everything they are entitled to, such as the Disabled Person's/Children's railcard, County bus pass scheme, cinema CEA card, Access cards for local entertainment venues etc.
- [ ] Refer to the Curriculum Framework for Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (via RNIB) and Specialist Deaf Curriculum (via BATOD)
- [ ] Keep portfolio of all skills / achievements and add to it - new interests etc.

Remember – follow the lead of the child or young person and their family...

Working on skills which enable them to do the things that matter to them

will help to build confidence and ownership

Key: **CYP** = Child or young person

Professional contacts:

Habilitation Specialist, Local Authority Sensory Support Service

QTMSI, QTVI and QToD, Local Authority Sensory Support Service