

The Sensory Service: Information for Parents and Carers

What is the Sensory Service?

The Sensory Service is a multi-disciplinary team based at the Ryegate Children's Centre. We aim to help parents / carers, school staff and young people to have a better understanding of sensory processing and how this impacts on every day life. We provide information and advice on how to adapt activities and the environment to support children's sensory needs. The team includes Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy.

What is Sensory Processing?

Sensory processing is the way that our body takes in and makes sense of information. Our senses include hearing, vision, touch, taste and smell, as well as vestibular processing (which helps with balance and movement), proprioception (which is the awareness of our body in the space around it), and interoception (our awareness of our internal body feelings). We use our senses every day to interact with the world.

What *Might* Happen When Sensory Processing Becomes a Problem?

- Children might find sensory information overwhelming and they might struggle to cope with certain sensory experiences. They may try to avoid certain things, people or places.
- Children might find everyday tasks difficult to tolerate, such as showering, wearing certain clothes, eating or teeth-brushing.
- Children may seek out sensations to help them to regulate in a way that creates a problem in another way, (for example, needing to move a lot during lessons).
- When children are overwhelmed by sensory information it can make it more difficult for them to communicate their needs.
- Sensory sensitivities can lead to higher stress and anxiety levels in a child. This in turn can mean they're more tuned into sensory information and can become overwhelmed more easily.
- Children may present differently from one day to the next and their sensory needs may be context specific or be influenced by other factors, such as mood, tiredness or stress levels.

Who is the Service for?

The service is for any child aged 3-16 years, living in Sheffield, who is having day to day difficulties because of the way that they process sensory information¹.

¹ Children known to the CAMHS Learning Disability service will be re-directed to CAMHS Occupational Therapy, if needing support beyond Universal Provision.

What Should I Expect from the Sensory Service?

Our service is tiered into three levels of provision to try and help us get the right support to as many families as possible.

Universal Provision: This is the first level of provision for all families. Our Virtual Therapy service provides information about sensory processing and how to understand your child's sensory needs, and provides strategies that may help you and your child. (There is the option to access this information via a group workshop for families who are unable to access digital resources).

Targeted Provision: If you have specific question(s) about your child's sensory needs that aren't covered in the Universal Provision Virtual Therapy package, you will have the option to contact our team to request further support. We will then liaise with you either via email or telephone to discuss your questions and to provide advice.

You can expect us to provide training resources for school staff about how to understand the sensory needs of children and help to make the school environment sensory accessible.

Specialist Provision: Sometimes, despite putting in place sensory strategies at school and home, your child may need a more personalised approach. If your child is on a reduced timetable, spends significant time away from the classroom, is at risk of exclusion, or is unable to attend school at all, with sensory issues being a significant factor, we will work with you and your child and school staff to help develop an individual plan for supporting your child's sensory needs in school and at home.

How Do I Get Help from the Sensory Service?

All the information, advice and resources are freely available at our Sensory Service Virtual Therapy area. You can find this at: www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/sensory. Or by scanning the QR code:



If having accessed these resources you still have further queries or concerns regarding your child's sensory needs, you can contact our team directly by completing a form, which you can access at the Sensory Service Virtual Therapy Area.

If you have any further queries about the Sensory Service, you can email us at:

making.sense@nhs.net