

Complete access to spoken language from the first months of life – a reality with Cued Speech

It's never too soon to start

Research shows that deaf children brought up with Cued Speech develop language according to the same milestones as hearing peers¹ but how soon can deaf children benefit from its use? Case studies and new Spanish research demonstrates that children can understand spoken language through Cued Speech from the few months of life.

My own experience, as the parent of two profoundly deaf children brought up with Cued Speech, confirms this. Both our sons had early access to language through Cued Speech, the oldest from nine months old and the younger one from about six weeks. Their outcomes were similar; both said their first word at 13 months and although their diction was poor in the early years their use of language was age-appropriate or better. However, communication with our younger son was much easier and more natural in the early months. It was quite obvious that he understood single words and simple phrases well before his first birthday.

Preliminary research by the MOC (Complemented Oral Model) group in southern Spain (which supports very early intervention using oral methods complemented by Cued Speech) has found that babies of one year can access Spanish through Cued Speech after a minimum of three months of exposure. Profoundly deaf children in their programme later 'use oral and written language with the same precision as their hearing peers'.²

An optimum age?

Although children can benefit from Cued Speech at any age, Belgium research indicates that children who access spoken language through Cued Speech before the age of three out-perform those who have access to it later.³

Family use

Cued Speech is quick to learn. As one parent said recently: 'Within a month [of requesting information] we were trained and had started to cue everything we said. Instantly, we felt confident and in control again as parents.'

All this would indicate that probably the best help teachers can give in the early years is to provide accurate up-to-date information about Cued Speech and to support parents' choices to use it.

References: ¹ Kilpila, 1985; Anthony, Moseley & Scott-Williams 1991; Metzger 1994

² www.uma.es/moc ³ Hage, 1994.