

Team Deaf or Team Autism – Finding Your Place

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We are parents of a 5-year old boy, Nat. He was diagnosed with a moderate to severe hearing loss after failing his newborn hearing screening. We embraced it – we were Team Deaf!

When Nat was two he was very language delayed and it was suggested that he may have autism - and the next stage was to join a two-year waiting list for a diagnosis. We were desperate to talk to someone about the deafness (and Nat's recurrent glue ear) and the possible autism as a bundle (we weren't in denial – just had questions!) but at this stage there was nobody in Team Deaf who could do this/felt comfortable to do this so we were just left with Google. We were now Team Internet!

Nat was eventually diagnosed in November 2016, shortly before his fourth birthday (by Deaf CAMHS a suggestion that came through our audiology consultant at the Nuffield) and suddenly our son wasn't deaf anymore but autistic and "complex needs". A lot of the deaf services disappeared and everything was about the autism (and those practitioners knew little about deafness). We were now Team Autism (with some support from our Teacher of the Deaf).

The only service we found that would even talk about the two diagnoses and how they might impact on one another was Deaf CAMHS.

It's not only trying to negotiate the diagnosis but practical help like schooling – NDCS and NAS could only give us advice in their specific areas of expertise but not for children with a dual diagnosis.

As parents we would like to see more joined up support, more discussion about deafness and autism, meet practitioners who understand the two diagnoses, more schools who want to meet our son's needs - and as a family - we'd like to join Team Deaf Autism.

Mum of two boys, 7 and 5. Our youngest, Nat, has a hearing loss (moderate to severe) which was identified through newborn hearing screening and an autism diagnosis (diagnosed November 2016). He has limited language ("more" and "again" and the occasional surprise word!) but is learning PECS and is on level 3 at present. He is also in an ABA programme and this has made a significant difference to bringing out and his abilities. We live in Hertfordshire and I work part time for an educational charity.



Deafness and Autism:

Can children benefit from hearing technology?