

A programme of studies including assessment of diagnostic accuracy of school hearing screening tests and a cost-effectiveness model of school entry hearing screening programmes

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Plain English summary

School hearing screening tests and SES programmes

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Plain English summary

Discovering if a child has problems with their hearing is important for development and education. Screening babies when they are born identifies most problems but hearing problems can start at any age. Many parts of the UK screen children for hearing problems when they start school but others have stopped doing this. We wanted to see whether having the screen was better or worse than not having it. We also wanted to see what was the best test to use.

We compared the screening test that is most commonly used, the pure-tone screen (PTS) (Amplivox, Eynsham, UK), with a hand-held device, the HearCheck screener (Siemens, Frimley, UK), which might be quicker to use but has not been used in schools before.

We found the two tests were equally good at finding children with hearing problems but that school nurses preferred to use the PTS.

We compared an area that has a school hearing screening programme (Nottingham) with an area that does not (Cambridge). We found that more children were referred for further testing in the area that did not have the screen but there was little evidence of a difference between the areas in terms of finding the children with problems.

We found that not having the screen when children start school is as good as having it in terms of finding children with problems and is probably better value but there has to be another system in place to find children. This usually depends on parents, schools and health professionals noticing promptly when a child might have hearing problems and referring them.

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