



# Northumberland County Council

Dear Headteacher/SEND CO



I am writing to you and to the parents/carers of all our hearing impaired children and young people in Northumberland to highlight the dangers posed by 'button' type batteries following recent items in the news and information from the NHS. Information is available on this link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-50810943>

Button type batteries are used in hearing aids. If swallowed or poked into nostrils or ears they are not only a choking hazard but can also cause serious harm from catastrophic burns; they can even cause death. Babies and young children under the age of five are most at risk of serious harm as they tend to explore the world by putting things in their mouth. Vulnerable children and adults with additional needs, learning disabilities or dementia may also be at risk.

Hearing impaired children who are younger than five years old are automatically given hearing aids with a **tamper proof battery compartment** from the hospital. This is also available for older children if the family is concerned about their additional needs, younger siblings, relatives or pets.

Hearing impaired children under the age of five, who use integrated receivers for their radio aid system have **tamper proof casing** fitted by a teacher from this service.

However, there may be children and young people over the age of five years in your school or setting whose battery compartment is not tamper proof. I thought it important, therefore, to highlight this issue and to ask you to ensure that:

- each child's batteries are kept in the teacher's drawer or in the office
- any button battery that has been dropped is looked for and found
- used batteries are returned to the packet (loose batteries are a fire hazard)
- all used batteries are returned in their packet to the teacher from this service or to the family
- hearing impaired children and young people, while encouraged to grow in independence in looking after their own hearing equipment as they mature, are aware of the dangers of button batteries and follow your school's guidelines on safe storage

- school staff are aware of the dangers associated with button batteries
- medical advice is sought immediately if you think a button battery has been swallowed

Thank you very much for your support on this matter. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss this anything further.

Yours faithfully

Isabel Russell

Service Manager