

Parents' Perspective

Newborn Hearing Screening Programme

Nate was born in 2003 at Joondalup hospital. Within 24hrs we were told he was born with Down syndrome. During the early days Nate underwent a "Newborn Hearing Test" where further screening was required due to the results. On consistency of results we were referred to WA Hearing for monitoring and WAIDE (WA Institute of Deaf Education) to access their Early Intervention Centre for hard of hearing children. Nate is profoundly deaf in his left ear, hence has unilateral hearing.

Due to the valuable Newborn Screening Programme we have been able to received health monitoring for the hearing Nate has and early education opportunities to prepare Nate for his school environment. I cannot commend WAIDE highly enough for their assistance in the early days and to date. Our family had a wonderful experience at WAIDE. Their staff was fantastic offering a programme in a fun, happy and colourful environment. Parents had involvement with activities learning better communication techniques for their child and we also had a chance during the morning to have a coffee, chat & timeout while the staff did further activities with the kids. Part of this programme also gave families access to a speech therapist for a one on one session with their child. I felt this morning at WAIDE, once a week with my child was one of the happiest and most valuable early intervention experiences in the mist of concern for my child's development and future having Down syndrome and hearing loss.

Nate continues to have hearing monitoring and WAIDE continues to support Nate with a visiting teacher of the Deaf at his school for a one on one session with him once a week. WAIDE also provide a Communication Development and Inclusion Plan where WAIDE work with teachers, I as a parent and Nate. Invaluable...

Nate can read his year 2 level books, write and spell over a hundred words correctly and the focus now is forming sentences. His inclusion and education at the school he attends, Quinns Beach Primary School, from staff is second to none and students and parents also value Nate at the school. His listening, speech and communication education has increased his opportunity for a happy and learning school life considering the challenges he faces everyday with Down syndrome and hearing loss as part of his life.

We have had a better story to tell than others so far. If Nate had not had the Newborn Hearing test goodness knows when his hearing loss would have been diagnosed amongst other early health issues and maybe even problems with speech development would have been accepted as ENT or another of the challenges of being born with Down syndrome.

I quietly have confidence due to Nate's early detection of health issues in this case hearing loss and access to the earliest intervention, that after his school years he will have increased opportunities to be able to contribute to his community, be employed and pay taxes so other families can receive the same benefits in the future...we hope.

Linking with the WA Register of Developmental Anomalies opens a world of opportunities of better health, services and education outcomes for the WA community.