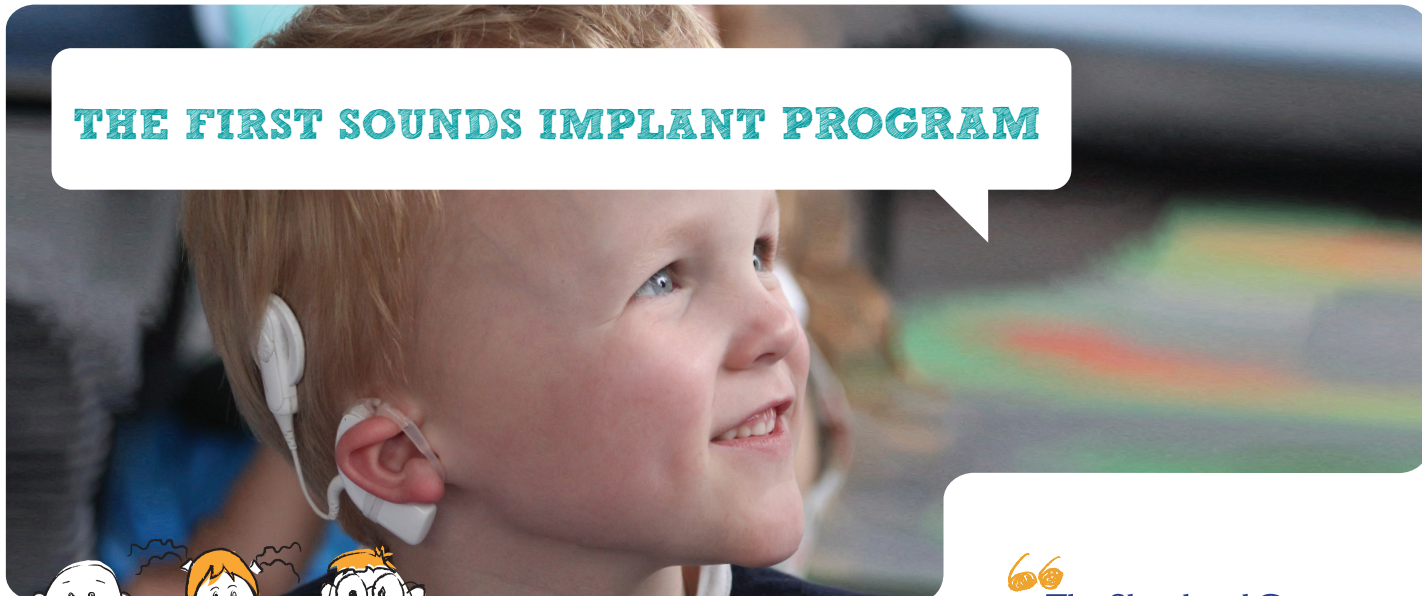


THE FIRST SOUNDS IMPLANT PROGRAM



About the First Sounds Program

The First Sounds Implant Program is a joint initiative of The Shepherd Centre and Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick. It is an interdisciplinary service that specialises in providing early and optimal access to sound for children with hearing loss.

The program provides audiological, medical, and family support; as well as speech, language and listening services - all of these are essential to support a child and their family prior to, during and in the long-term following implant surgeries with devices such as cochlear implants and Baha. The bulk of appointments are conducted at the child's local branch of The Shepherd Centre.

An invaluable part of the program is its combination of services available at a central location - children and their families can access audiological appointments, listening, speech and language therapy, and child and family counselling services, all under the one roof. The services are integrated and interdisciplinary to maximise the listening, speech and language benefits to each individual child, and help each child reach their full potential in a professional, family-friendly and supportive environment.

Learning to listen & speak with a hearing device

The primary way for children to learn to listen and speak at The Shepherd Centre is through using their listening. For most children with a hearing loss, a hearing device can be fitted to amplify the sounds around them, so that children can learn about sounds for communication (language, listening, speaking) and recreation (singing, dancing, music).

Many different pieces of information about our world are communicated via sounds, and children need good access to these sounds in order to develop a full understanding of the world around them.

The Shepherd Centre provides services for children with varying degrees and types of hearing loss so that they can make the best possible use of their hearing. For many children, this is done with a traditional hearing aid that can amplify the specific sounds that they do not hear well on their own.

For other children, a traditional hearing aid is unable to provide sound that is loud enough or clear enough for typical language development. These children and their families may consider implantable hearing solutions such as cochlear implants or Baha.

"Our expert team of ENT surgeons, audiologists and child & family counsellors will support your family every step of the way."

- Yetta Abrahams,
Principal Audiologist



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The First Sounds Program - Frequently Asked Questions . . .

These answers are designed to give families an introduction to the First Sounds Implant Program, however, if you have further questions or would like additional detail, please do not hesitate to speak with your Audiologist.

Who can access the Program?

Any child already accessing services at The Shepherd Centre can access the First Sounds Implant Program. In addition, any family with an infant, child or teenager that may be considering an implantable hearing solution is welcome to access our services at any time.

Ongoing services are provided to all clients of the First Sounds Implant Program beyond childhood and well into adulthood.

What services are included in the First Sounds Implant Program?

All of the essential services for evaluation, counselling, surgery, medical support, ongoing family support, education and listening, speech and language development are available as part of the the First Sounds Implant Program.

Support at school, liaison with teaching and support staff, advice on assistive technologies and annual speech and language assessments are also available.

The majority of these services are provided at a local branch of The Shepherd Centre, and visiting, remote and telepractice services can also be a component of the service.

In addition, the First Sounds Implant Program clinicians work closely with a range of other professionals who can provide additional services if needed.

What are the costs involved?

For cochlear implants: surgery, devices, parts, repairs and other associated costs are covered by Australian Hearing, Medicare and in some cases, private health insurance. Your audiologist will review your situation in detail and let you know if there are any anticipated out of pocket expenses.

The surgeons working with The Shepherd Centre bulk bill for activities related to implantation as part of the First Sounds Implant Program.

For other implantable solutions, there may be some costs involved due to limited funding from government sources. Again, your audiologist will discuss this information in detail with you.

I'm interested in finding out more information about implantable hearing solutions- what are the next steps?

If you have regular appointments at The Shepherd Centre, talk to the staff about finding out about implantable hearing solutions and what they involve.

This doesn't mean you or your child needs an implant! We are happy to provide you with balanced, evidence-based information for your background knowledge, or to support any decisions that you may be considering now or in the future.

It is important to remember that the field of implantable hearing solutions is evolving swiftly and information can be out of date very quickly. We are happy to provide the most up-to-date information to you at any time, from around Australia and around the world.

"He calls the cochlear implants his 'CIs', so in the morning he asks us to put his CIs in so he can hear; or if they fall off he'll tell me his CIs are off - or if I'm telling him off, he'll turn them off and say, 'I can't hear you'!"

- Jo, parent



"The Shepherd Centre has worked closely with our family to give our son hearing from both sides - thanks to the use of a Baha device - the ability to talk, and the best start in life."

- Vanessa, parent



"Having an audiologist in the same building as your therapist has been such a benefit for my son. I feel that the communication and the knowledge the therapists have with the technology is fantastic. When I am at the Centre, I know I have the opportunity to just pop my head in and ask the audiologist a quick question after a therapy session."

- Belinda, parent

