

Title	A qualitative analysis of parental coping with an early diagnosis of hearing loss in Ireland
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Publication date	2016
Original Citation	Kenny, M. 2016. A qualitative analysis of parental coping with an early diagnosis of hearing loss in Ireland. PhD Thesis, University College Cork.
Type of publication	Doctoral thesis
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Download date	2026-09-17 02:18:29
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/2181

Abstract

The recent implementation of Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening (UNHS) in all 19 maternity hospitals across Ireland has precipitated early identification of paediatric hearing loss in an Irish context. This qualitative, grounded theory study centres on the issue of parental coping as families receive and respond to (what is typically) an unexpected diagnosis of hearing loss in their newborn baby. Parental wellbeing is of particular concern as the diagnosis occurs in the context of recovery from birth and at a time when the parent-child relationship is being established. As the vast majority of children with a hearing loss are born into hearing families with no prior history of deafness, parents generally have had little exposure to childhood hearing loss and often experience acute emotional vulnerability as they respond to the diagnosis. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews primarily with parents (and to a lesser extent with professionals), as well as a follow-up postal questionnaire for parents. Through a grounded theory analysis of data, the researcher subsequently fashioned a four-stage model depicting the parental journey of receiving and coping with a diagnosis. The four stages (entitled Anticipating, Confirming, Adjusting and Normalising) are differentiated by the chronology of service intervention and defined by the overarching parental experience. Far from representing a homogenous trajectory, this four-stage model is multifaceted and captures a wide diversity of parental experiences ranging from acute distress to resilient hopefulness.