

Dear Parent of Shine Member

Living with hydrocephalus presents many challenges – not least because many people have limited understanding of the condition.

We have created this letter, which you are welcome to give to your child's school, that includes useful information to assist them in supporting your child.

If you feel it would benefit them, please add their details at the top and email/ hand this to your child's school, so it can be added to your child's school records for future reference.

The letter may help your child if they're finding it tricky to explain how they are feeling and if, at any time, they think their shunt isn't working properly.

We also have two resources that might support you and your child's school in further understanding your child's condition and support needs:-

- Your Child and Hydrocephalus 88-page book available to download or order here <https://www.shinecharity.org.uk/for-parents/your-child-and-hydrocephalus>
- A one hour recording of our Hydrocephalus and Learning Webinar is available by emailing littlestars@shinecharity.org.uk

Yours,



Gill Yaz
Health Development Manager, Shine

Letter regarding pupil: First Name Surname

Address

Postcode Date of birth/...../.....

Dear School

This letter has been given to you because your pupil has hydrocephalus and has a shunt in situ. Shunts are thin tubes that drain Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) from the ventricles in the brain or other CSF-filled spaces to be absorbed in another area of the body, thus reducing the high intracranial pressure and thereby preventing damage to the brain tissue. Insertion of a shunt is the most common treatment for hydrocephalus.

Shunts sometimes malfunction and prompt neurosurgical attention may be necessary. Children who have had previous shunt malfunctions may recognise their own 'individual' symptoms of raised pressure, but sometimes new signs and symptoms can present from one shunt blockage to the next. Symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- drowsiness, reduced responsiveness
- headaches, neck pain
- nausea & vomiting
- visual disturbances such as blurred or double vision, photophobia (sensitivity to light)
- dizziness, loss of consciousness

Signs of shunt infection are similar to malfunction but also include:

- fever
- seizures
- neck stiffness
- redness along shunt tubing

Shunts can also malfunction over a prolonged period, and symptoms may be less clear, possibly including:

- fatigue, general feelings of being unwell, lethargy
- new or worsening visual or perceptual problems
- changes in behaviour
- decline in academic / mental / cognitive performance

Over drainage of the shunt can lead to headaches, especially in the afternoons, which are often relieved by lying down.

Children with suspected acute shunt malfunction or infection should be seen at a neurosurgical unit within four hours of the onset of symptoms. It is therefore extremely important that the school let parents know if staff observe any signs of acute or chronic shunt malfunction in the pupil, so that parents can take the necessary action.

Further information can be found here <https://www.shinecharity.org.uk/for-professionals/hydrocephalus-alerts-for-professionals>

Hydrocephalus and learning

As well as potential health complications, children with hydrocephalus may have challenges living (and learning) with the condition, including speed of processing information; behaviour; self-monitoring; relationship issues; memory, planning, organising issues; and anxiety.

Shine has produced resources to support schools in better understanding hydrocephalus and a child's development and learning needs.

These include:

- **Strategies to support children with hydrocephalus in the classroom**, which can be found here <https://www.shinecharity.org.uk/for-professionals/hydrocephalus-quick-teaching-tips>
- A one hour recording of our **Hydrocephalus and Learning Webinar** is available by emailing littlestars@shinecharity.org.uk
- **Your Child and Hydrocephalus** 88-page book available to download or order here <https://www.shinecharity.org.uk/for-parents/your-child-and-hydrocephalus>

Should you require more information or have any questions about the condition, and/or hydrocephalus and learning, please visit www.shinecharity.org.uk. You can also contact us via Tel: 01733 555988, or email info@shinecharity.org.uk

Yours,



Gill Yaz
Health Development Manager, Shine