Strategies

• Observe and note sounds to which your child shows an adverse reaction.
• When they are distressed, move your child away from the sound; comfort and reassure them.
• Explaining the sound often helps.
• If possible, give a warning just before a predictable noise occurs e.g. noises in the home such as switching on machines.
• Outside be aware of approaching noises and alert your child e.g. a motorbike, a train etc.
• Reactions will often diminish if your child has some control over the sounds they find uncomfortable. They can be encouraged to turn on the TV and over time, increase the volume.
• Record one or more distressing sounds and allow your child to listen, quietly at first, gradually increasing the volume, as they become accustomed to it.

• Your child may be reassured if he knows he can leave the room for a short time if he is exposed to a distressing noise.
• Repeated gentle exposure to sound will gradually reduce sensitivity.
• It may be helpful to play quiet background music or sounds during the day and night.
• Work with others e.g. grandparents/pre-school staff.
• Take your time and give positive feedback.
What is hyperacusis?
Hyperacusis is sensitivity to sound.
Children with hyperacusis will usually have normal hearing.
Children with hyperacusis will experience abnormal discomfort or distress to sounds that other children tolerate well. This reaction may be specific to certain sounds. It may be that not all sounds of the same loudness will cause discomfort.

Advice
Whilst it is important to acknowledge that your child is intolerant to certain sounds it is important not to avoid sounds, but to try strategies to reduce your child’s anxieties.
Opting for silence or earplugs is not recommended, the ear and brain need to be exposed to everyday, tolerable sound in order to establish normal sensitivity.

Signs and symptoms
Children may show distress to sounds such as thunder, fireworks, hand clapping, vacuum cleaners, traffic, shouting, party noise, classroom noise, music etc.
When the unwelcome sound occurs children may react by putting their hands over their ears and crying.
They may show signs of panic, anger or distress. They may try to avoid the sound by leaving the room or switching off the TV or radio.
Some children may be nervous of particular activities or rooms where they have experienced distressing sounds before. Some children become particularly distressed in crowded, noisy environments.