

Health Professionals' Consultation

Adult Hearing Services



Background

As part of the Department of Health's 'Modernisation of Health and Care' programme, there is to be a phased roll out of extended patient choice of Any Qualified Provider (AQP).

We are carrying out a consultation to identify local views on the top 3 priorities for bringing care closer to home from April 2012 and one of the services to be considered is 'Adult Hearing Services'.

Hearing impairment and deafness affect the lives of large numbers of people, are associated with ageing and can limit active participation in family life and society if not assessed and treated appropriately.

Of the UK population aged 60+ years, half are hard of hearing or deaf, and this figure rises to 93.2% in the over 80s (RNID). This translates to 5.4 million people over 60 years in England who are deaf or hard of hearing

Historically, NHS Direct Access Audiology (DAA) services have always been integrated with hospital ENT (ear, nose & throat) services and a high proportion of DAA services continues to be delivered on acute NHS hospital sites.

Priorities

We would like you to indicate whether you think it is a priority for your local health economy to bring adult hearing services closer to home.

The benefits to your patients would be:

1. Hearing assessments can be carried out within 13 working days of your referral
2. Patients would no longer need to travel to a hospital; hearing assessments can be carried out in local health centres or even in some larger GP practices which is especially important for older people
3. In many cases, assessment and fitting of a hearing device can take place at the same appointment. This means fewer visits to the audiologist and faster correction for hearing loss
4. Batteries can be requested and collected from a community centre or can be sent in the post
5. Patients will be able to have follow up checks in a local setting for both their hearing and hearing devices



The benefit to the local health economy is an improved level of care but at a lower cost. Patients with complex audiology issues will still be seen by an ENT consultant but the majority of people who have age associated hearing loss will benefit from a closer, faster service.