

Date 19/12/2025
Your Ref
Our Ref 10913

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
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richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

I write in response to your request for information in relation to Audiology Services.

Question:

- I notice from the Board's web site that there has been a service redesign [around May 2025] of part of the Board's audiology services [<https://services.nhsllothian.scot/audiology/test/>].

I am writing to ask the Board to provide me, in accordance with the Freedom of Information legislation, with a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment the Board is required to carry out when redesigning services.

Answer:

I am advised that the only redesign undertaken relates to a recent quality improvement project. Given the nature of this project, an Equality Impact Assessment was not required.

The evaluation has been completed and is enclosed for your information.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

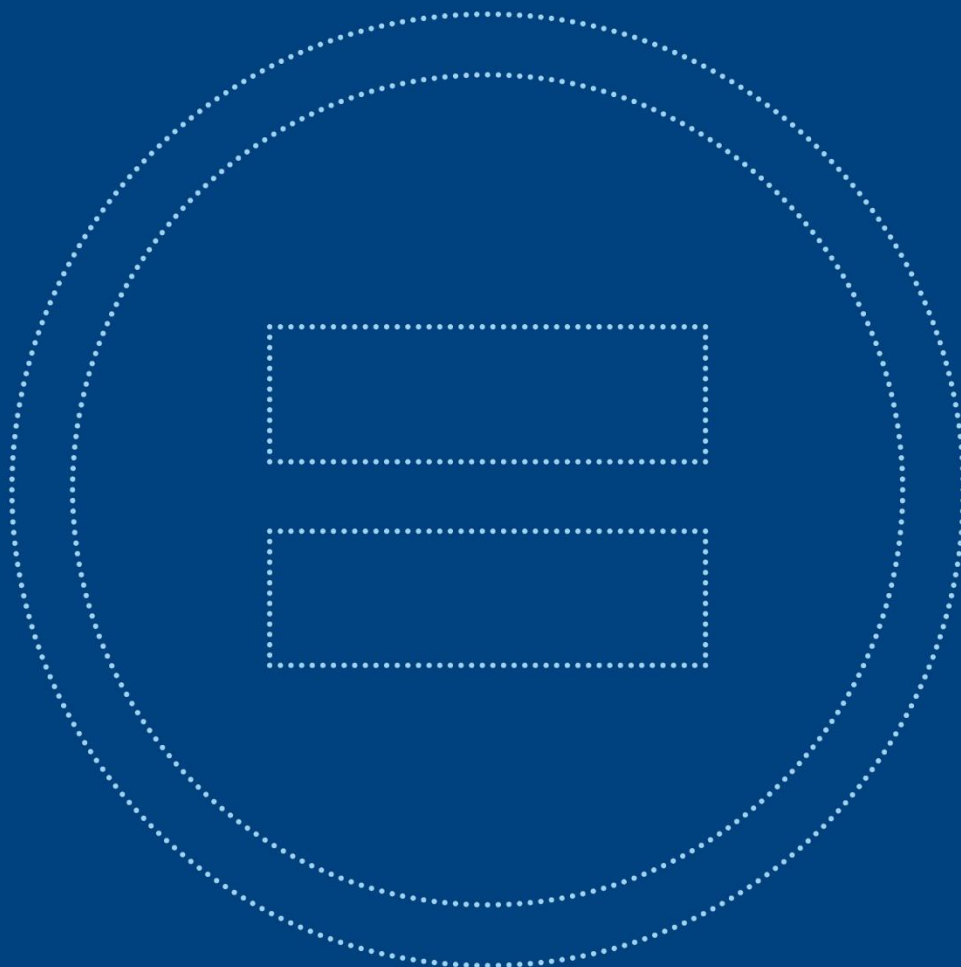
FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive
Enc.

Equality. Fairer Scotland. Children's Rights. Record of decision not to carry out an Impact Assessment

Adult Audiology Quality Improvement plan to enhance
Face-To-Face Audiology Services.



Title of proposed work: Enhancing Face-To-Face Adult Audiology Services.

Purpose/objective of proposed work:

Objective: To improve the quality of care in NHS Lothian Adult Audiology services by transitioning from postal hearing aid services to in-person appointments, ensuring comprehensive evaluation, servicing, and support for patients.

Rationale: The shift to face-to-face appointments will enable Audiology clinicians to provide more thorough assessments of hearing aids, address patient concerns effectively, enhance overall patient experience, and provide better patient-centred care striving to meet best practice guidelines. This will initially phase out postal services for hearing aid repairs, servicing, tubing, and batteries, followed by hearing aid issue services. Additionally, issues with postal hearing aid services, such as delays, lost items, improper servicing, improper fit, acoustic feedback, and incorrect verification of hearing aids affecting optimal sound quality, will be mitigated through direct patient engagement.

Key Changes:

- Hearing aid servicing, repairs, and tubing replacements will now be conducted during in-person appointments rather than via postal service.
- Patients will have direct access to audiologists for assessments and adjustments, improving device performance and patient satisfaction.
- Hearing aid batteries will no longer be posted but will be available for collection at designated local libraries.
- Postal hearing aid issues such as lost, delayed, or improperly serviced devices will be eliminated through in-person care.
- Hearing aid issue services will now be conducted face-to-face, ensuring proper fitting, verification, and immediate troubleshooting.

Advantages of Face-to-Face Hearing Aid Issue Appointments:

- **Improved Fit and Comfort:** Ensures the hearing aid is fitted correctly for optimal comfort and effectiveness.

- **Enhanced Sound Quality:** Allows real-time verification and adjustments for the best acoustic performance.
- **Immediate Troubleshooting:** Audiologists can address any issues on the spot, reducing delays in obtaining a well-functioning hearing aid.
- **Better Patient Education:** Patients receive hands-on guidance on using and maintaining their hearing aids properly.
- **Reduced Risk of Errors:** Eliminates common postal-related issues such as incorrect programming or missing components.

Implementation Plan:

1. Communication Strategy:

- Inform patients of the transition through information leaflets, and updates on the NHS Lothian website.
- All patients will be offered a face to face hearing aid issue appointment following their direct referral appointment.
- All patients who have posted/dropped their hearing aids in for servicing will have an information leaflet provided to them when collected/posted back.
- All patients will be told by clinical members of the team that they no longer can post hearing aids for servicing and they will be given information on battery collection.
- Display posters in clinics, and libraries, and GP outlining the new process.
- Provide clear instructions on how to book appointments and collect batteries.
- Health records team will let patients know when they call for an appointment that we will be implementing this quality of change.
- Address common issues patients faced with postal services and explain how in-person care resolves these problems.

2. Operational Changes:

- Increase clinic availability to accommodate additional in-person appointments.
- Allocate dedicated slots for hearing aid servicing, repairs, and issue appointments.

3. Patient Support:

- Offer guidance on booking appointments with contact details for the department.
- Ensure patients understand the benefits of in-person services, including improved hearing aid functionality and troubleshooting.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation:

- Gather patient feedback through surveys to assess satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.
- Monitor appointment availability and waiting times to ensure timely service delivery.
- Review the impact of the change on hearing aid functionality and patient outcomes through follow-up consultations.

Timescale of project

1. Communication Strategy:

- Communication via information leaflets, posters and website will begin from 01.05.2025.

2. Operational changes

- **Full face to face clinics will commence:**
 1. Hearing Aid issue: 01.06.2025
 2. Hearing Aid Servicing: 01.08.2025.

Exemptions to face to face

If a patient is unable to travel for their appointment due to:

- House bound or an in patient
- Clinical need for patient not to attend face to face clinic
- Patient has made the decision not to attend face to face. They will initially be offered a face to face appointment, however if they request a postal service, this will be documented both on Auditbase and TRAK.
- Patient who is registered with significant site impairment, dual sensory impairment or dementia.
- Patients unable to attend clinic due to full-time work or carer responsibilities (this applies only to hearing aid servicing and batteries)

Reasons why no impact assessment is needed

1) Relevance to the Equality Act 2010, socio-economic inequalities and children's rights

Do these statements apply to this proposed work: No

Equality – This work has no or limited relevance to discrimination or equality and good relations.

Yes

Socio economic disadvantage – This work has no or limited relevance to health and/or employment inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

Yes

Upholding or Protecting Children's Rights - This work will have no or limited relevance to children and young people up to the age of 18 and their enjoyment of UNCRC rights or meeting the needs of care experienced children and young people.

Yes

2) Necessity – reasons an impact assessment is not required to give due regard to equality and children's rights

This work may be relevant to equality and children's rights, but we have decided that we are able to give due regard to equality and children's rights using other, more appropriate, means than an impact assessment. For example, this is because we have done engagement with staff and service users via questionnaires, the work only affects a small number of people and we have been able to identify their needs and the impact, and we are applying existing (pre-COVID) policy and guidance.

Written by: Head of Service – Adult Audiology

Date: 01.04.2025

Next steps

Keep a copy of this record and send it to the people who make the final decision with the other paperwork. You do not need to publish it or send it to the Equality and Human Rights team. However, you may need to use this record at a later date to explain the decision not to carry out an ECRIA and to demonstrate that we have given due regard to equality and children's rights, which are statutory duties.

Please note this was presented at OAS SMT on 27.05.2025.