



Eastern and Coastal Kent

Audiology Services in East Kent Briefing Paper January 2009

This paper is intended to give an update on the services currently provided by the Audiology Service commissioned by Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT and the future plans of the service.

Background and need for change:-

Referrals for Audiology services are made through one of three routes, via ear nose and throat Services, via direct access referrals from GPs into Audiology and self referrals made by patients who are upgrading their analogue hearing appliance for a digital aid.

Just over a year ago the average wait for the Audiology service in East Kent was in excess of 52 weeks, peaking in July of 2007 when the average wait was 96 weeks.

In September 2007 East Kent recognised over 5000 patients waiting (see table 1 below) with an average wait of 85 weeks.

The challenge for East Kent was to radically reduce the long waiting list and to bring waiting times in line with the national commitment to the 18 week referral to treatment target.

Key milestone achievements:-

Significant developments have been made within this service over the last year, especially with regards to East Kent Hospitals University NHS Trust (EKHUT) waiting lists.

In direct response to the challenge to reduce the long waiting list the PCT commissioned Hearbase as independent audiologists to help reduce long waiters; they agreed to treat circa 2000 patients by the end of March 2008. Hearbase currently work out of four sites based in Folkestone, Ashford, Canterbury and Dover.

In addition the PCT commissioned a community audiologist to work out of three GP practices (Whitstable, Deal and Ramsgate) to further reduce the backlog of waiters.

At the end of March 2008 the number of people waiting for audiology services at EKHUT were reduced below the target to 1056 of these only 449 patients were waiting longer than 18 weeks through their own choice and the remaining 605 patients were all on 18 week pathways.

In recognition of the continued challenge to the provision and sustainability of audiology services in East Kent, Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT made provision for an additional £1.7m to be made available through the Local Delivery Plan process to

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be used in securing additional capacity through the local hospital provider and an increase in community based services. In addition this funding will assist in dealing with an anticipated up turn in demand based on the success of securing reduced waits into the service, and the continued number of patients that might take up the opportunity to change their analogue aids for digital equipment.

April 2008

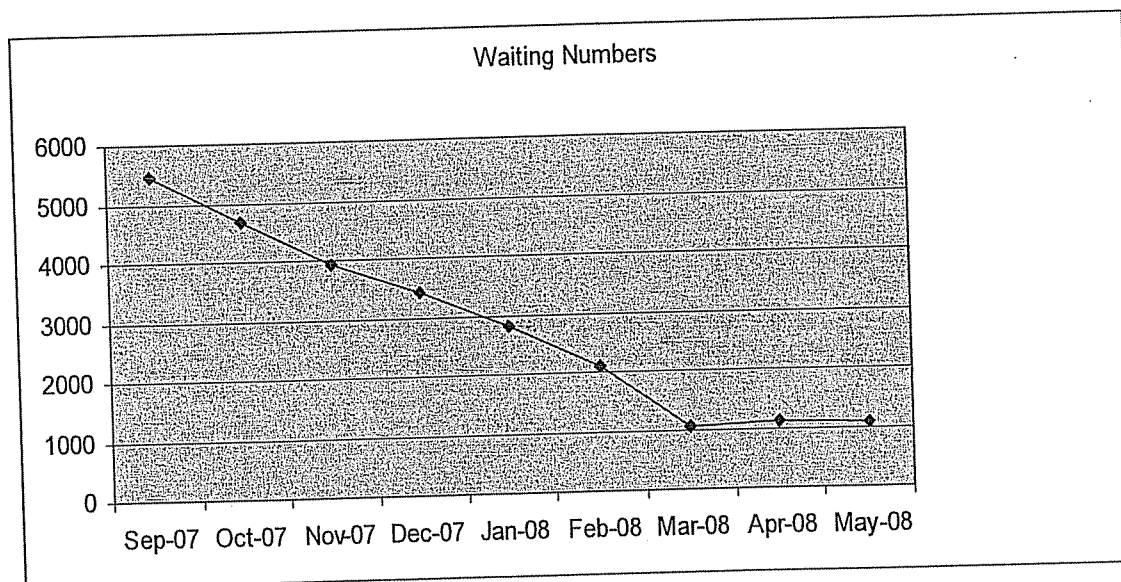
In April 2008 a fourth community audiology clinic was opened at Sittingbourne, to further support the drive for care closer to the home and to bring a much needed choice alternative to swale patients. Historically Swale patients have been referred to Medway NHS Foundation Trust for all audiology treatment.

November 2008

At the end of November 2008 the number of patients waiting for audiology services at EKHUT is 742 (see table 2 below); all patients are on 18 week pathway (assessment - fitting) which is in line with the national standard for all elective services. Direct access patients all have their assessment within 6 weeks and wherever possible and medically appropriate patients are often assessed and fitted on the same day. Over 95% of people on the current waiting list profile will be both assessed, and fitted with a hearing aid within 11 weeks. 67% of people identified on the profile will be assessed and treated within 6 weeks of referral.

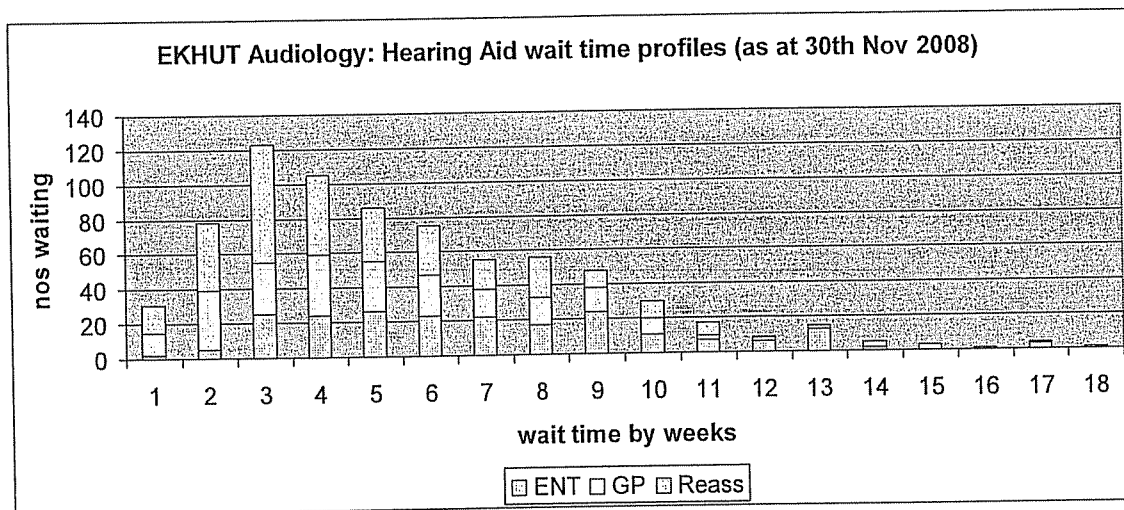
Open ear testing is also widely used, again where medically appropriate

Table 1 Waiting List Progress



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Table 2 Waiting List Profile



Choose and Book

Direct access to audiology at EKHUT is now available via Choose and Book and the waits are in line with the national diagnostic target of a maximum of 6 weeks.

Hearbase and the community based audiologist have been given extended contracts and are now receiving referrals via the Choose and Book system. Average waits for these services is 4 weeks, with a large majority of patients being seen with three weeks.

Performance Management

Throughout this time data collection has improved and the Audiology Service has been performance managed with the PCT's lead commissioner on a monthly basis on progress against the agreed action plan for full roll out of services. The following key performance indicators are also monitored and reported against:-

- Number of new referrals received by source
- Number of new patients seen
- Number of bilateral fittings

Much work has now been done to unbundle the block contract for work at EKHUT and Audiology work is now paid for on a cost per case basis, this enables a much more detailed understanding of performance as a whole.

In addition to the above a whole system service improvement group has been established that has a membership that includes GP's, Consultant Audiologists, Finance and Practice based commissioning representatives and a representative from HI-Kent.

Paediatric Audiology

The World Class Commissioning arrangements recently endorsed by Eastern and Coastal Primary Care Trust will require us to revise the commissioning of paediatric audiology services to ensure a coherent paediatric audiology pathway. This would

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suggest that the children's lead commissioner should undertake the commissioning of paediatric audiology services collaborating closely with public health leads (for neonatal hearing screening) and head and neck commissioner (for ENT provision).

Until recently an adult audiologist employed by EKHUT provided the audiology assessments and services for children. However, the Clinical Services Manager recently made a successful internal Trust business case to develop a specific paediatric service. The Service now has a full time Specialist Consultant Community Paediatrician specialising in audio-vestibular medicine who is now leading the team and managing the newborn hearing screening programme. In addition EKHUT have now established two specialist paediatric audiologist posts. One post is now filled and the other is being covered by a locum whilst the second post is being recruited to (in progress). This means that as well as increasing the capacity of the overall audiology services, the standard and quality of provision for children is improved by the establishment of a more specialised paediatric service.

The Kent Children's Trust arrangements strengthen opportunities for collaboration at strategic and local levels and the Children's Commissioning Health Team will also work closely with KCC Education Deaf Services Team and Specialist Teaching Services thus ensuring a coherent pathway to enable children to have access to an early year's services, education and community provision.

In order to determine the level of the required commissioning budget an audit of need over the last three years has now been requested.

Children in the Swale area are provided for by West Kent PCT paediatric audiology team.

Future Planning

As commissioners we continue to proactively search for interested willing providers to declare their ability and desire to provide services in the future. As we establish the future levels of demand we will be working in partnership with all interested parties and stakeholders to establish a platform for sustainable service across the economy. And in addition ensure that services are established in rural and hard to reach areas.

ECKPCT continue to work with Medway NHS Foundation Trust to further establish links and opportunities for Swale residents to be able to receive services closer to their homes and enable swifter access to Audiology services and for GPs to be able to make such referrals through the Choose and Book system.



**Audiology Services in West Kent Briefing Paper
January 2009**

This update builds on the previous report submitted to the HOSC in July 2008.

During the past year considerable efforts have been made by NHS West Kent to reduce waiting times for digital hearing aids to the target level of 18 weeks from GP referral to treatment.

An additional contract was awarded to Clinicenta to enable this, with funding made available for 1200 new audiology assessments and hearing aid fittings for people from the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells areas. Patients treated in this service are both those waiting for first fit hearing aids and those changing from analogue to digital.

This additional capacity extends the services already provided by Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW) for patients in the south of West Kent. Medway NHS Trust treats patients in the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley areas. A number of other centres provide audiology services for the people of West Kent, including Bromley Hospitals Trust, Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and a number of other London Hospitals.

Since the previous HOSC update and our success in reducing waiting times, Clinicenta now accepts direct referrals from GPs. Patients referred in this way receive a hearing assessment within 10-14 days and have their hearing aids fitted within 4-6 weeks of referral.

Currently all patients referred for audiology across West Kent are assessed within 6 weeks and treated within 18 weeks.

In line with "*Transforming Adult Hearing Services*", both MTW and Medway are redesigning their processes to ensure they can provide 3 year reviews for all patients. In the meantime best use is being made of other opportunities to offer such a review, for example Medway re-testing patients who attend for a repair.

Work on improving audiology services sits within the ENT stream of the Elective Care Programme. The Programme forms a key component of the overall Fit for the Future strategy and aligns with the NHS West Kent Operating Plan for 2008/09 for example in achieving and sustaining 18 weeks referral to treatment times, giving fast access to high quality care closer to home, aligning with pathway redesign work required to support the new hospital at Pembury, and the patient choice agenda. Through this Programme the PCT works in close partnership with Trusts across the local health economy.





Eastern and Coastal Kent

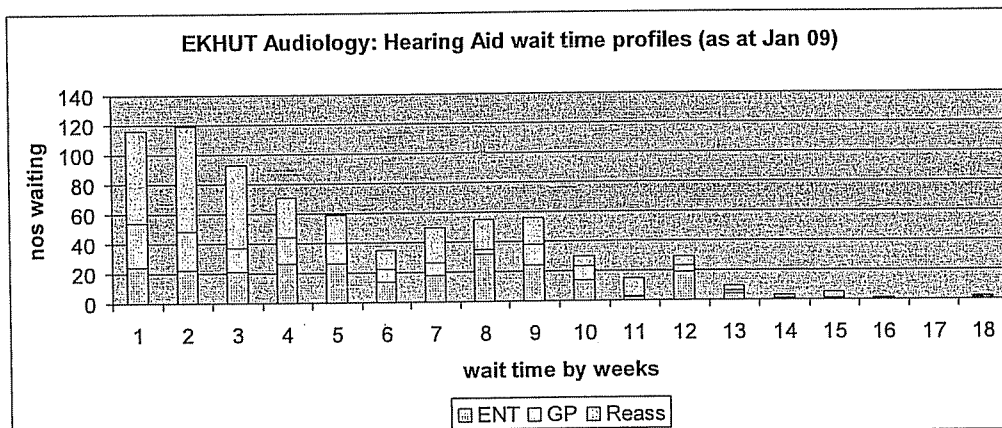
Audiology Services in East Kent briefing paper March 2009

Following an update made at the HOSC meeting of 6th February, this paper is intended to give an additional update on the services currently provided by the Audiology Service commissioned by NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent. In addition it sets out to answer the supplementary questions asked by the HOSC committee.

Current position:- East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust (EKHUFT)

As at the end of January 2009, NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent have 748 patients waiting for audiology services at East Kent Hospital University Foundation Trust (EKHUFT). All patients are on an 18 week pathway and will be seen within that time frame unless they choose to extend their pathway through exercising their own personal choice. The average wait for audiology at EKHUFT is now 10 weeks from referral through to the fitting of a hearing device.

Figure 1 waiting list profile at EKHUFT



Current waiting times for patients seen by an audiologist working in a community setting remain at an average of 4 weeks from referral.

Current position:- Medway Foundation Trust

Medway Foundation Trust remain a key provider of audiology for Swale patients, referral into the service is made either directly into audiology for those patients over 65 years of age or through an ENT pathway for all other patients.

The current wait for an ENT 1st appointment is 5 weeks, onward referral into audiology if it is required is 4 weeks. In addition to the provision Swale GPs are able to access an

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audiologist placed by ECKPCT at Sittingbourne memorial medical practice this is accessible through local choose and book with current waits of a maximum of 6 weeks.

Supplementary questions following February update

1. Given the importance of testing the hearing of newborns, can the PCTs provide further information on any newborn hearing screening programmes they have and how many children are being screened?

The newborn hearing screening programme within NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent is well established and follows national guidelines. Over the last year the number of babies on the programme was 7334.

Please see appendix 1 for an outline of the screening pathway

2. What provision is made for testing military personnel returning from conflict situations and are they given priority?

Although the DOH has issued a paper on priority treatment for ex servicemen (*meeting the healthcare needs of Armed Forces Personnel their families and veterans*). This covered specialist care outlining the services provided at hospitals with which the MOD has a contract. Audiology was not covered in this document and as such testing is offered through our current acute and community teams (current waits are outlined above)

3. Can NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent name the sites from which Hearbase operate in Folkestone, Ashford, Canterbury and Dover?

Hearbase operate from the following locations:-

Hearbase Ltd 140 Sandgate Road Folkestone CT20 2TE	Hi Kent 46 Northgate Canterbury CT1 1BE	Kenneth Bird Opticians 7 Park Place Ladywell Dover CT16 1DF	St Stephens Medical Centre St Stephens walk Ashford TN23 5AQ
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In addition to the above, Hearbase are also offering services at the Spencer Wing at Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate.

4. What provision exists for GPs to carry out hearing tests and what encouragement is there for GPs to advertise hearing tests?

Currently GP's do not carry out hearing tests, but patients with hearing difficulties are offered a choice firstly as to whether they would like the opportunity of having an audiometry test and secondly as to where they would like to have that test carried out.

5. Can the PCTs provide more information about progress in searching for willing providers as well as what plans are in place to ensure audiology services are sustainable in the future?

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As commissioners we continue to proactively search for interested willing providers to declare their ability and desire to provide services in the future and extend choice for patients. As we establish the future levels of demand we will be working in partnership with all interested parties and stakeholders to establish a platform for sustainable services across the economy, and in addition to this will ensure that services are established in rural and hard to reach areas.

6. What plans are there for encouraging “high street audiologists” in the same way as there are high street opticians?

High street audiologists are encouraged to tender for NHS work through the “Supply to Health” website as and when commissioners identify the need for additional providers. ECKPCT plan to advertise shortly for increased audiology provision in some hard to reach areas (i.e. Tenterden and New Romney)

7. What public education campaigns around the dangers to hearing exist aimed at young people?

The Lead Commissioner for Head and Neck Services within NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent is planning to carry out social marketing work alongside Public Health experts and with the Communications team “HOUSE” initiative specifically to educate teenagers over the dangers of playing music and games through personal sound systems (IPODs) at too loud a volume highlighting the long term damage that can be caused by this behaviour.

8. What plans are being made to provide services in Kent so that Kent patients do not have to travel to London hospitals?

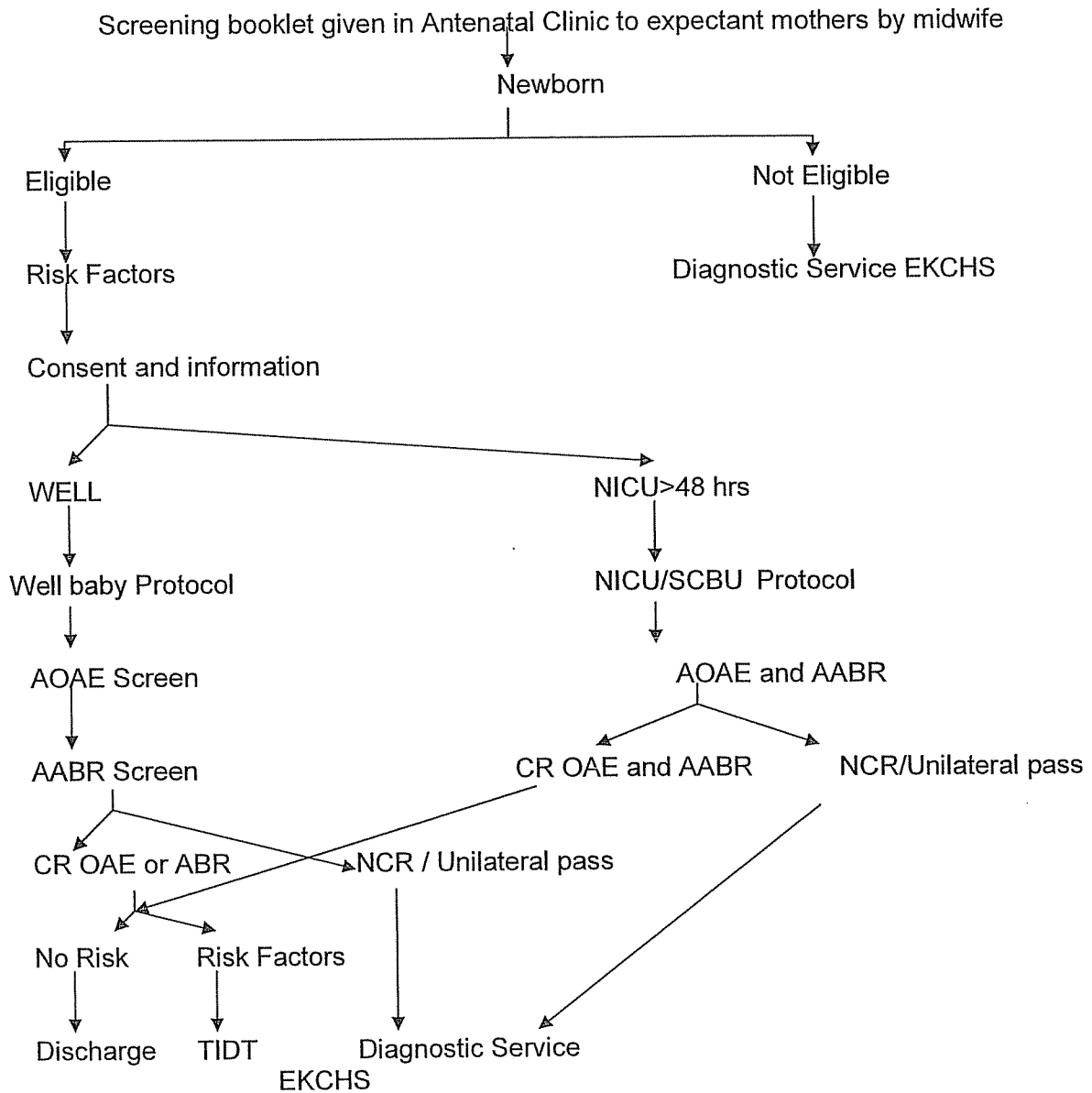
We have had significant success in providing audiology services closer to home, this means that patients would only travel to London for their treatment if they chose to do so. As such Eastern and Coastal Kent patients are able to choose London providers as a choice option, however a full range of audiology services are fully available through our local acute provider supplemented by community and private audiologists.

9. The reports suggest that adult audiology serviced in Swale are provided by NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent and paediatric audiology services in the same area are provided by NHS West Kent. Can the trusts provide assurances that this does not create confusion in the provision of services?

Whilst paediatric audiology services for Swale patients are largely provided through NHS West Kent, we have been working with EKHUFT to establish opportunities to offer their services as a choice option. Further work is being done to establish options for outreach by EKHUFT into the Swale area. However to assure that the current approach does not lead to confusion, robust adherence to patient pathways is endorsed through communication to General Practitioners and performance monitoring by commissioners is being put into place.

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Appendix 1



Diagnostic test currently done by ENT dept, with appointment of Paediatric Audiologist the test will be done under EKCHS along side the Audiological Physician's clinic.

Diagnostic Service

- ABR pass, if click 35 dBnHL and tone pip 40 dBnHL (BC if indicated)
- ABR optional for well babies OAE bilateral pass is sufficient (2 octave=>6 dB)
- Tympanometry high frequency (if less than 4 months old)



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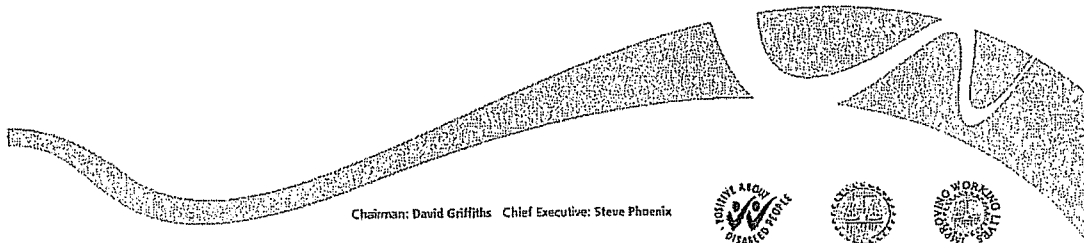
25 March 2009

Dear Paul

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Audiology Updates

Further to your letter of 3rd March 2009, please find below further details on audiology to answer the committee's questions:

1. Newborn Hearing Screening within West Kent offered screening to 1080 babies in December 2008. This included babies born at Medway Hospital who are mainly Medway and Eastern & Coastal babies. As a programme we are now offering screening to all eligible babies.
2. There is provision for testing military personnel returning from conflict in a timely manner via services provided at Medway Foundation Trust and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. Within Medway Foundation Trust, these patients would normally be seen by ENT in the first instance to establish whether there were any conditions requiring immediate surgical intervention but a hearing test would be performed in the audiology clinic. Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust has confirmed that military personnel are prioritised and treated as appropriate.
3. We can confirm that Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley patients receive audiology services, provided by Medway Trust, at Gravesham community hospital and Darent Valley Hospital. These patients are receive a hearing assessment within 6 weeks and are treated within 18 weeks
4. NA
5. Currently GPs do not carry out hearing tests. However, Clinicienta are currently considering providing each surgery that uses their service with handheld initial testers.
6. We have a collaborative approach between the PCT and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust to establish how a patients needs are met in the best place by the best person. Meetings are shortly to take place to discuss sustaining audiology services and the future of where this service may be best provided, which could be "high street audiologists". We have already used a range of high street providers to assess and treat our patients and we will continue to do so when there is a need. We may move to an any willing provider model in the future, when current contracts expire, and of course 'high street audiologists' will be free to apply for consideration
7. As per question 6



Chairman: David Griffiths Chief Executive: Steve Phoenix



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8. Currently the PCT has no public education campaigns in place; however Hi Kent is a member of RNID and actively supports their campaigns, such as the latest campaign 'Don't Stop the Music', so are helping them to get their message out in Kent. In addition, Hi Kent is in the process of acquiring funding for a research project into this issue. They intend to carry out research over the next year with a view to publicising our findings during Deaf Awareness Week in May 2010. We also intend to give a series of talks on the findings to Kent schools reaching as many young people as possible.
The PCT will need to consider public education on use of for example ipods- which could be done via our volunteer organisations such as Hi Kent, RNI, as the Hi Kent response suggests.
9. Patients currently do not have to travel to London Hospitals for audiology services as hearing assessment and fitting of hearing aids are provided at Maidstone, Kent and Sussex, Sevenoaks, Darent Valley and Gravesham Community hospitals, a service is also provided at Preston Hall Maidstone. A patient, however, may choose to have an appointment in London as outlined in the PCTs Free Choice Strategy.
10. Medway Foundation Trust provide some of the adult services in Swale under a block contract with NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent. Paediatric services are provided in Swale by West Kent Children's Hearing Services based at Preston Hall.
The adult service at Medway Hospital will see children for specialist testing that cannot be provided by the children's service. This is undertaken by the Consultant Audiological Physician and includes taking impressions for all the paediatric earmoulds.

I hope this addresses the Committee's queries, if you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Steve Phoenix
Chief Executive