

Audiology Update

Background – Extract from Minutes relating to Meeting of 6 February 2009.

13. Audiology Update

(Item 4)

(1) Following the Committee's previous consideration of Audiology Services across Kent, the two Primary Care Trusts for the administrative county of Kent had been written to ask for an update on the progress in implementing some of the views expressed by the Committee when it had previously considered Audiology Services including the future plans for the audiology service.

(2) Within the papers for the meeting, were two updates from both Eastern and Coastal Kent and West Kent Primary Care Trusts.

(3) The Chairman indicated that should Members have any questions that they wished to raise with the two PCT's who were not present to respond to any questions, then these questions should be forwarded to the Research Officer to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Overview and Scrutiny Localism Manager. As a consequence the following additional questions were raised by Members of the Committee:-

- a. 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?
- b. What provision is made for testing military personnel returning from conflict situations and are they given priority?
- c. Can NHS West Kent clarify the situation regarding patients in the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley areas? Your report refers to additional capacity extending capacity for patients in the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells areas, but what about those patients who have audiology services provided by NHS Medway? Does the statement that patients across West Kent are assessed within 6 weeks and treated within 18 weeks include patients in north Kent?
- d. Can NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent name the sites from which Hearbase operate in Folkestone, Ashford, Canterbury and Dover?
- e. What provision exists for GPs to carry out hearing tests and what encouragement is there for GPs to advertise hearing tests?
- f. 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?
- g. What plans are there for encouraging "high street audiologists" in the same way as there are high street opticians?

- h. What public education campaigns around the dangers to hearing exist aimed at young people?
- i. What plans are being made to provide services in Kent so that Kent patients do not have to travel to London hospitals?
- j. The reports suggest that adult audiology services 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?

Eastern and Coastal Kent

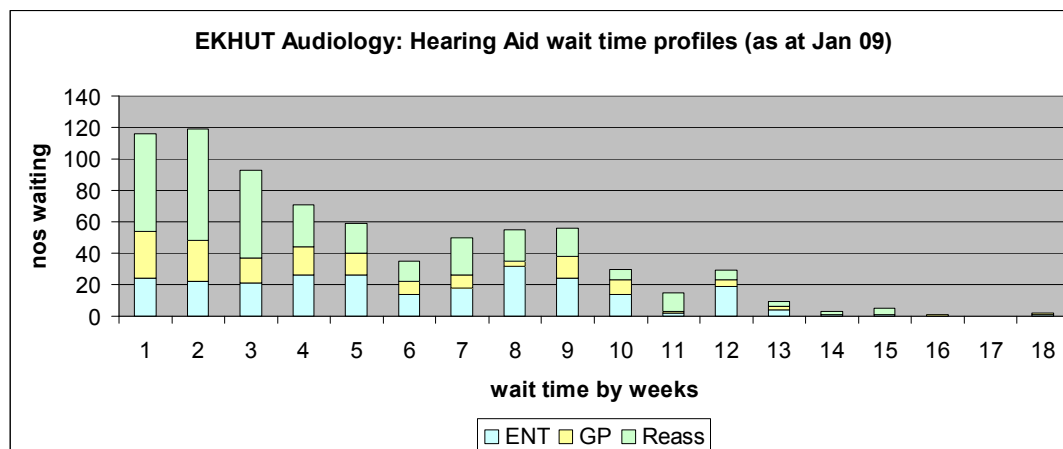
Audiology Services in East Kent briefing paper March 2009

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

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?

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.

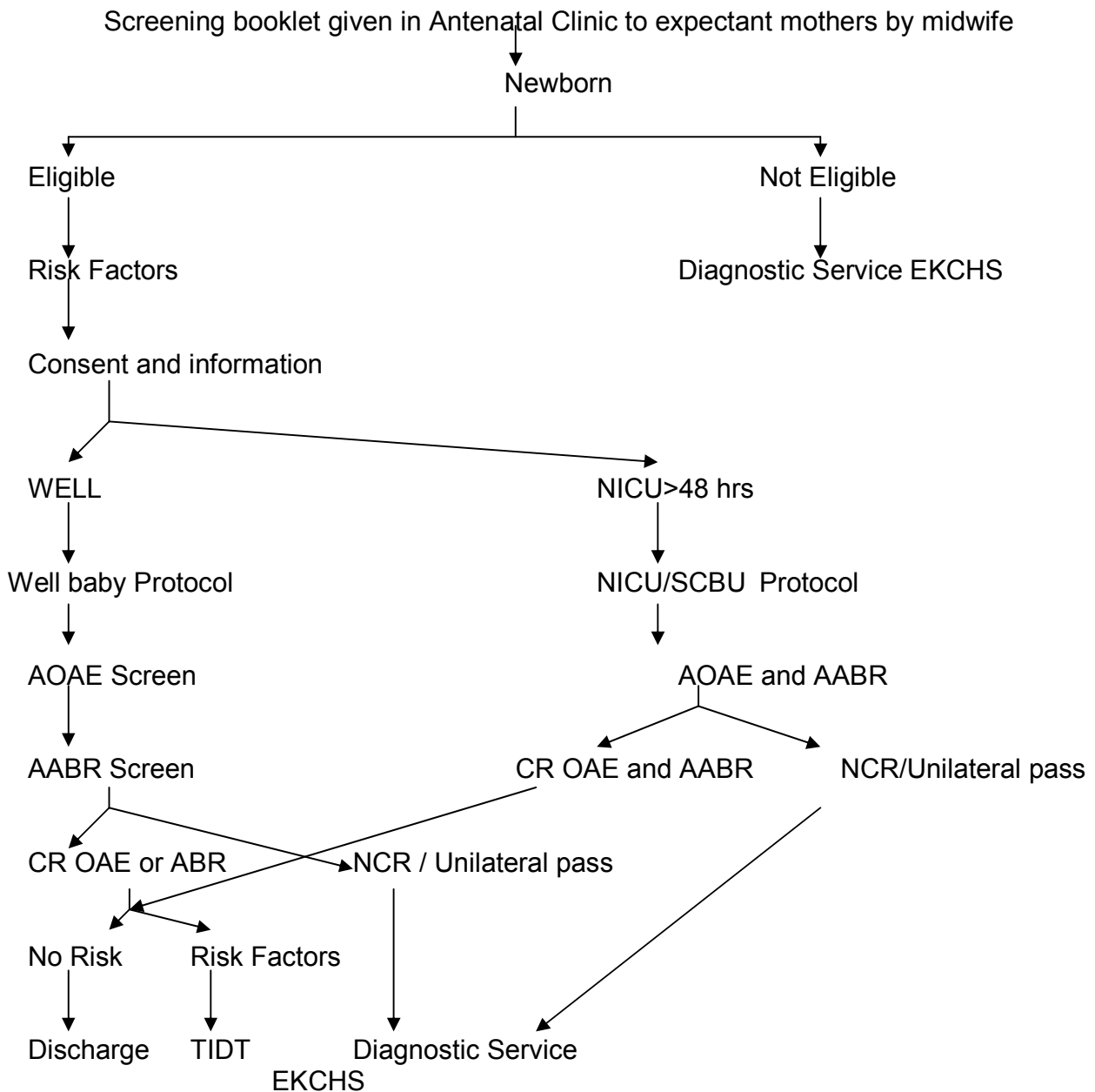
8. What plans are being made to provide services in Kent so that Kent patients do not have to travel to London hospitals?

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.

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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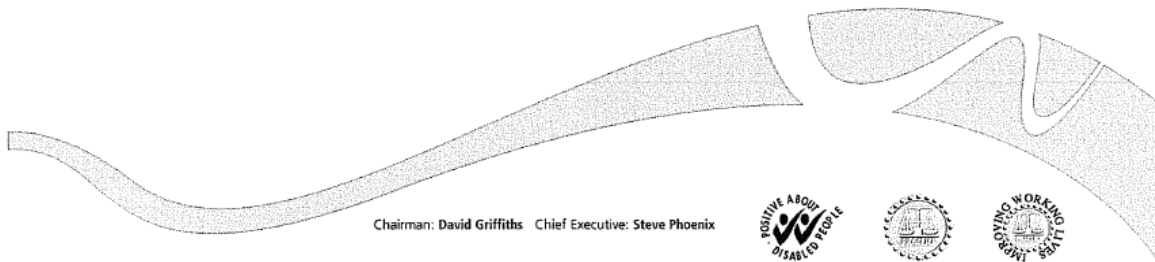
25 March 2009

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 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, Clinicenta 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



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