

Appendix 1

Re-commissioning Hearing Services for Adults

1 Introduction

This paper describes the proposed model for the future of adult hearing services for those aged over 55 years with age-related hearing loss in Brighton and Hove.

DoH Operational Guidance published in July 2011 set out plans for a phased implementation of the extension of patient choice to Any Qualified Provider, treating 2012/13 as a transitional year and starting with a limited set of community and mental health services.

When a service is opened up to choice of 'Any Qualified Provider', patients can choose from a range of providers all of whom meet NHS standards and price. Patients will choose based on quality and individual preferences such as geographical convenience. Money will follow patients' choices. Competition will be on quality not price and Providers must pass a standard qualification process to ensure they meet the appropriate quality requirements.

Commissioners will own the service specification and will confirm if the provider can deliver that specification. Because providers are qualified, commissioners know that a range of safe, good quality and affordable providers are available to whom they can refer their patients without the cost and effort of competitive tendering.

Primary Care Trust (PCT) Clusters, supported by pathfinder clinical commissioning groups, have been offered a menu of services from which to choose a service which would best meet local requirements. NHS Brighton and Hove have selected Adult Hearing Services.

2 Hearing Services for Adults

The ageing population means that demand for both hearing assessment and treatment services is set to rise substantially over the coming years. However, a significant proportion of this client group will have routine problems that do not require referral for an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) out-patient appointment prior to assessment. These patients would benefit from direct access to adult hearing care services with a referral being made directly from their GP, enabling timely diagnosis and treatment.

The aim is to provide a comprehensive patient-centred direct access adult hearing service for age related hearing loss in line with national guidance and local requirements. The vision for people with age related hearing problems is for them to receive high quality, efficient services delivered closer to home,

with short waiting times and high responsiveness to the needs of local communities, not unlike an optician service, and free at the point of access.

The Direct Access Adult Hearing Service is aimed at adults over the age of 55 experiencing difficulties with their hearing and communication who feel they might benefit from hearing assessment and care, including the option of trying hearing aids to reduce these difficulties. It is not appropriate for all hearing loss and there will still be scope for those with other medical conditions which may affect their hearing to receive appropriate treatment elsewhere, as at present.

Timetable. Advertising for potential bidders will take place in late May 2012, following which there will be a period of evaluation to determine suitable providers. It is expected that providers will be approved by August 2012 with a view to implementing the new service from September 2012.

Service Specification. The Commissioners have worked with the Clinical Commissioning Group to set an outcome-based specification that encourages providers to deliver high quality services, based on national exemplars, and published guidance where available. The service specification is largely based on the draft SHA Clinical Leads Audiology Network (CLaN) specification and is in line with national guidance, but has been adapted to take into account local circumstances and reflect the breadth of needs of local patients.

Monitoring of Providers. Regular performance reviews will be undertaken as part of normal contract monitoring, including patient feedback, and the Commissioners will take action where they receive information signalling the quality of services may not be meeting the contractual standards.

Information provided by NHS Brighton & Hove