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## **Enter and View Report**

Specsavers Bexleyheath, Erith and Sidcup

January 2020

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## **Enter and View report**

### **Audiology Services at Specsavers, Sidcup, Bexleyheath and Erith**

**October, November and December 2019**

#### **About this report**

This report will present the information collected from managers, receptionists and audiologists as well as the data collected from an observation sheet in relation to people's audiology visit and the service provided by Specsavers Audiology Departments, in Bexleyheath, Erith and Sidcup.

#### **Acknowledgements**

Healthwatch Bexley (Healthwatch) would like to thank the the Audiology Clinics at Specsavers, Bexleyheath, Erith and Sidcup, including their patients and staff, for their valuable contribution and for participating in this survey. Please note that this report relates to findings, observations and data gathered through Enter & View visits to the Audiology clinic at Specsavers Bexleyheath on 18<sup>th</sup> October, Erith on 7<sup>th</sup> November and Sidcup on 16<sup>th</sup> December. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed during these visits.

#### **What is Enter and View?**

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement. The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries and audiology services.

Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service. Equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand. These Enter and View visits help to inform a wider study of audiology services in Bexley Borough.

Enter and Views are not intended to identify specific safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. If at any time an authorised representative observes anything that

they feel uncomfortable about they need to inform their lead who will inform the service manager, ending the visit.

In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

This report will be disseminated to the local Health and Wellbeing board, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS England, Healthwatch England, and audiology service providers.

## Executive Summary

Nationally hearing loss affects 11 million people which includes 9 million people living in England. Numbers are expected to rise in the UK to 15.6 million by 2035 as a result of the ageing population (Kunzmann, 2019). According to the report; Valuing Audiology (Kunzmann, 2019) hearing loss is a large and important public health issue. Hearing loss affects people's ability to communicate with others including family and friends, can reduce people's quality of life and it is associated with an increased risk of dementia and depression (Saito et al, 2010). Moderate hearing loss increases the risk of dementia by three times, severe hearing loss by five times and for people with mild hearing loss, the risk of developing dementia is approximately doubled (Lin et al, 2011). Wearing hearing aids can improve people's ability to communicate and their quality of life (Ferguson et al, 2017) and there is evidence to suggest that wearing hearing aids may slow the rate of cognitive decline and reduce the risk of depression (Maharani et al, 2017). Hearing loss can result in social isolation as people feel excluded and unable to communicate effectively with family and friends (National Council on the Ageing, 1999).

Action for Hearing Loss (2019) suggest that many people are helped by wearing hearing aids, but that data may be incomplete, as there is often data showing how many people access audiology services but no data showing how many people are actually fitted with hearing aids and of those that are fitted with hearing aids, how many actually continue to wear them. It is important that services providing NHS hearing aids are effective, accessible to all needing them, and of good quality to ensure people benefit from the advantages of wearing hearing aids (Kunzmann, 2019).

Since the NHS was founded in 1948, hearing aids have been provided free of charge for those that need them (Action on hearing, 2015) and hearing aid services (audiology services) are commissioned and paid for by local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's). Specsavers is commissioned to provide services for those aged 50 or over with mild or moderate hearing loss throughout the borough. Other services are provided at Queen Mary's Hospital and Specialist audiology services are provided by LGT, Guys and St Thomas and St Georges if need requires.

Access to NHS audiology services is through the GP who will first check for causes of hearing impairment such as ear infection or ear wax build up, before referring to the most appropriate audiology service. Ear wax removal is now no longer commissioned by Bexley CCG as a free service through the NHS in Bexley Borough. Residents are instructed to try home treatments or have wax removed through private providers such as Specsavers.

Hearing aids are available both privately and on the NHS. The Free NHS hearing aids that are most commonly provided, are behind the ear aids which are fine-tuned to suit the individual's needs.

Private suppliers offer a wider choice of hearing aids, but these can cost £500-£3500 per hearing aid, and may not include aftercare (Action for Hearing Loss, 2020). Aftercare services such as re-tubing and batteries are provided for 3 years for NHS hearing aids after which a new GP referral is needed.

The aim of the Enter and View was to understand local resident's views on the quality of audiology services at local Specsaver audiology clinics.

## Key Recommendations for Specsavers

- Specsavers could promote the use of the hearing loop setting on hearing aids and increase patients knowledge of what a hearing loop is and how it may help patients to hear more clearly. Understanding and usage of the hearing loop setting could be checked at follow up and aftercare appointments to make sure patients fully understand usage.
- Patients told us they were generally happy with the service at Specsavers, but only 66% were happy with their NHS hearing aids. Specsavers should continue to collect patient experience feedback, paying particular attention to why patients may not be happy with their hearing aids. This will allow Specsavers to explore what they can do to increase patient satisfaction and encourage continued use, so that patients get the full benefits of wearing hearing aids
- Audiologists should signpost patients to other services in the community such as Bexley Deaf Centre, who may offer help and support with living with hearing loss and learning to lip read.

## Methodology

The information for this survey was captured by visiting the 3 branches of Specsavers in October, November and December 2019. During each visit, Healthwatch talked to staff, gave out a questionnaire and completed an observation sheet. Quantitative and qualitative feedback was obtained in the following ways:

- a) An observation sheet in relation to access, accessibility to a hearing loop and the written/printed information on offer.
- b) Comments from either the audiologist, audiology assistant or manager.
- c) Patient questionnaire exploring the audiology patients experience with the referral process, appointment system and aftercare service.

For the patient questionnaire, generic details, such as age and the gender of participants was capture and can be found in appendix 1. The questionnaire further assured the respondents of anonymity and that participation was voluntary. A total of 12 questionnaires were filled in from the announced Enter & View visits.

Every effort to obtain a representative sample of the population in Bexley was made for this survey. The questionnaire respondent numbers are not high as many visitors were either

not attending for audiology appointments, were not Bexley residents or were private patients.

N.B. All percentages stated in this report are based on the total sample that responded to each question. Some questions attracted multiple responses, which may mean all sums may not add to 100.

## Observations

The Healthwatch Bexley Enter and View Team were met at reception by the manager of each branch of Specsavers, shown around and introduced to the staff and audiologists. Specsavers explained to their teams why we were there and what we would be doing. We were made to feel welcome at all branches.

**Access-** This section covers a range of important aspects; such as car parking arrangements, ease of entry into the premises and facilities provided. Bexleyheath Specsavers Branch is located in the pedestrian area of the Broadway opposite the shopping centre. There is plenty of parking nearby and disabled bays in the shopping centre car parks. The Sidcup Branch is located in the High Street, there is no car park but free parking can be found in the side streets nearby. The Erith branch is located in the Riverside Shopping Centre which is served by a pay and display car park with disabled parking bays. All the branches are accessible and are able to accommodate wheelchair users.

**Reception Area-** the reception desks were situated in the front or middle of the shop floor in all branches. Check in was face to face as none of the branches we visited had an electronic check in system. Patients were sometimes greeted by their audiologist on arrival.

**Waiting room / Seating Area-** Waiting rooms are an essential part in the patient's experience, so the Enter and View team considered seating arrangements, from the perspective of patients. Audiology patients were seated with patients waiting for optical appointments in the main waiting area. The Erith Branch had a smaller seating/waiting area but was observed to be less busy.

Most of the audiologists were seen to come out into the waiting area and meet patients personally when their appointment was due, which established a rapport and ensured patients found their way to the correct room.

**Hearing Loop-** Signage indicating that a hearing loop was observed in one branch, Bexleyheath but no signage was seen at Sidcup or Bexleyheath. That does not indicate that signage is not there just that it was not seen on the day.

**Overall observations-** On the whole, our Enter and View teams found Specsavers to be clean, free from obstructions and to have good lighting and reasonable noise levels, although Bexleyheath and Sidcup may be louder and very busy at certain times.

<b>Enter and view observation sheet- Specsavers</b>			
<b>Branch</b>	<b>Bexleyheath</b>	<b>Erith</b>	<b>Sidcup</b>
How many reception desks are there?	1 for both audiology and optical appointments	1 for both audiology and optical appointments	1 for both audiology and optical appointments
How many staff on reception?	1	2	2
Is the reception desk area easy to find?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is there sufficient seating area for patients?	Possibly not at busy times	Not many seats four in total	Yes
Are the seating areas separated for optician appointments and audiology appointments?	No but there are some chairs outside the treatment rooms	No the same area	No the same area
Are patients directed to the seating area by the receptionist?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is there an electronic check in system?	No	No	No
Is there a call system for appointments?	No	No	No
How are patients called for their appointments?	Collected from seating area by audiologist	Collected from seating area by audiologist	Collected from seating area by audiologist
Is the reception area noisy?	At busy times it can be noisy	No	A little background noise, radio on quietly, customer/reception conversations
Is there an indicator showing how long patients will have to wait?	No- appointments were generally running to time on the day we visited	No- appointments were generally running to time on the day we visited	No- appointments were generally running to time on the day we visited
Are there posters on the walls advertising hearing aids?	None observed just a small display of leaflets and hearing aids on the main shop floor	Yes, also leaflets on shop floor	Yes
Are their sufficient leaflets/magazines to help distract patients whilst they are waiting?	Leaflets no magazines seen	None observed	Yes leaflets, but no magazines seen
Are there signs indicating there is an induction loop for people with hearing aids?	No signs observed inside the store but a small sign was seen in the shop window facing the street	Yes there is a sign behind the reception desk	No, there is a loop but no signs were observed
How is the interaction between staff and patients?	Interaction between staff and patients was good	Professional and friendly	Polite and friendly
Is there a long wait for patients with appointments?	No	No	No
Are any staff BSL trained or have had Deaf awareness training?	No- BSL Yes- Deaf awareness training	No- BSL Yes- Deaf awareness training	No- BSL Yes- Deaf awareness training
Is there an interpreter service?	No	No	No
How are appointments booked (telephone, letter, email, face to face, GP or online)?	Telephone, online, email, face to face and via GP	Telephone, online, email, face to face and via GP	Telephone, online, email, face to face and via GP
Clinic times/days	1-2 clinics running 7 days a week plus a late night	1 clinic running on Tuesday and Thursday	1 clinic running on Monday mornings
General comments		This branch was very quiet both for optical and audiology appointments compared to the Bexleyheath branch	

## Comments from the audiology assistant or manager

### **Audiologist Erith**

The audiologist has been in post for approximately 5 years. They began working in the branch on the optical side and they were pleased to be asked by Specsavers to train as an audiologist. Specsavers provided and paid for all the training. They explained that Specsavers ask patients how they preferred to be contacted and that this is recorded on their notes. The audiologist has received Deaf Awareness training and did not find communicating with patients not wearing hearing aids generally to be a problem. They told us that feedback was collected from patients regularly in the form of a patient survey and does not feel there is anything that currently needs changing to improve the patient experience.

### **Audiology Assistant Sidcup**

The audiology assistant has been working at Sidcup for approximately 3 years. They like working for Specsavers as they believe progression and training within the company is good and have taken part in Deaf Awareness training. They do not find communication with those with a hearing loss to be challenging. Sidcup carries out a patient survey and feels that they do not need to improve the patient experience as they are quite accommodating, offering those with additional needs extra time or split appointments.

### **Audiologist Sidcup**

The audiologist told us that now they use a central booking system so that GP's can book appointments direct. This has made things much easier and they are experiencing less problems with GP referrals. If they do experience problems or have incorrect referrals the audiologist calls the GP practice regarding the problem so that it can be sorted out. She explained that problems are often a result of locum's or new GP's who are not used to the system. Occasionally, patients are referred with tinnitus or vertigo who should be referred to more specialist services. She explained that occasionally some patients go back to their GP if they are experiencing problems with their hearing/hearing aids which may result in a re-referral rather than contacting Specsavers. Specsavers are responsible for aftercare for 3 years from the initial referral and no re-referral is needed and incorrect re-referrals are a waste of the GP's time and resources.

Specsavers keep a log of problems/incorrect referrals and they are working towards IQIIPS accreditation to improve the standard and service they offer. They also get patient feedback in the form of a patient survey to find out what is working, may need improving and record patient satisfaction.



## **Bexleyheath Branch Manager**

The manager explained how some GP referrals had been a concern in the past. The branch had experienced incorrect patient referrals from GPs for patients who needed ear wax removal or had an ear infection and could not have a hearing test unless these problems were addressed. The manager explained how, in some cases, they had to tell patients to go back to their GP which patients were not happy about. Also some patients were booked for home visits but this was for the patient's convenience rather than being based on patient need. Specsavers will do home visits but they should only be booked for patients that a GP would do a home visit for. Occasionally, the branch had experienced patients being referred who had more specialist needs. These patients had to be referred back to their GP so they could be re-referred to the correct service provider. Bexleyheath Specsavers had also experienced out of borough patients being booked appointments by their GP. Specsavers held 'Lunch and Learn' events for GP practices which helped to create better understanding of the service offered by Specsavers and their limitations.

As GP's can now book appointments direct with Specsavers for people experiencing hearing loss, occasionally the appointment is missed. Letters informing patients of their appointment date and time are not received until after the booked appointment. This can be frustrating for all as it leads to missed appointments.

Ear wax removal is not available on the NHS anymore but Specsavers offer ear wax removal for a charge. The manager explained that GP practices sometimes tell people to go to Specsavers for this service but do not make it clear that it will not be free. He explained how many people felt it should still be free on the NHS and either could not afford to pay or did not want to pay to have ear wax removed.

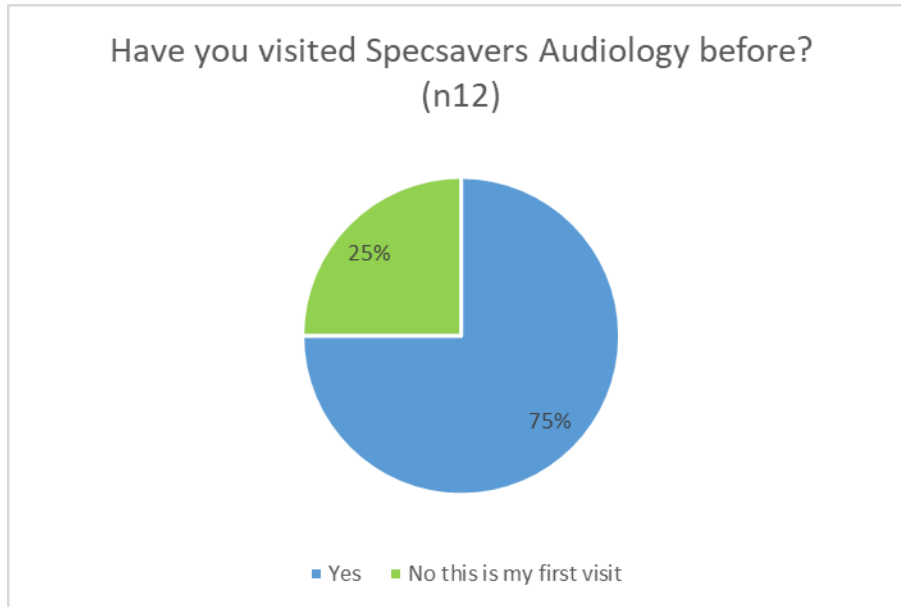
Specsavers are happy to adapt hearing test appointments for those that may have additional needs or have dementia, according to their needs; for example, by offering two appointments rather than one longer appointment. They can produce literature in large print but do not have any easy read literature available.

Initial appointments are booked for 1 hour and if possible hearing aids will be fitted the same day although this is not always possible. Follow up appointments are booked to last 15-30 minutes depending on need. Aftercare services are provided as a walk in service at Bexleyheath.

## Patient questionnaire

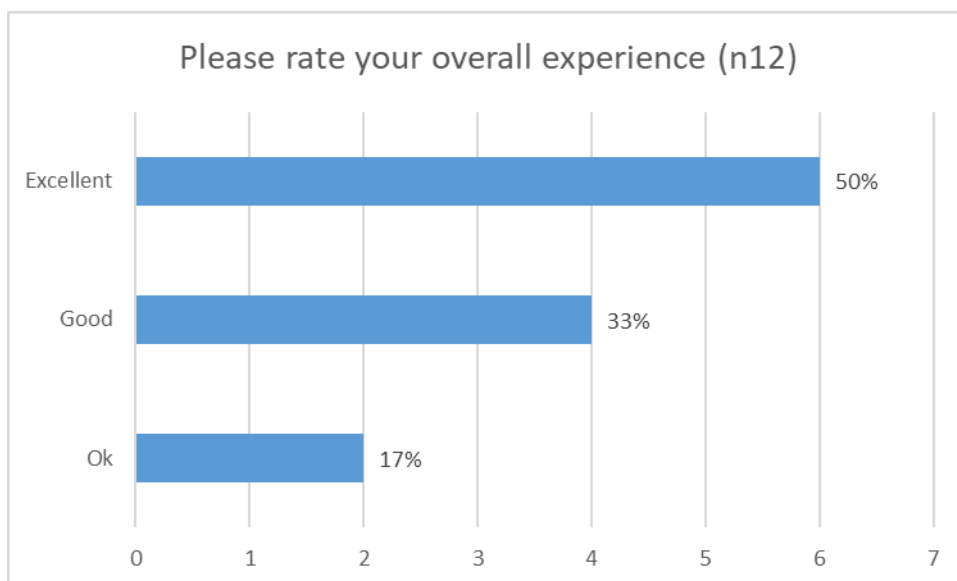
### Have you visited Specsavers audiology clinic before (n12)?

75% of those we listened to had used Specsavers Audiology services previously, for 25% it was their first visit.



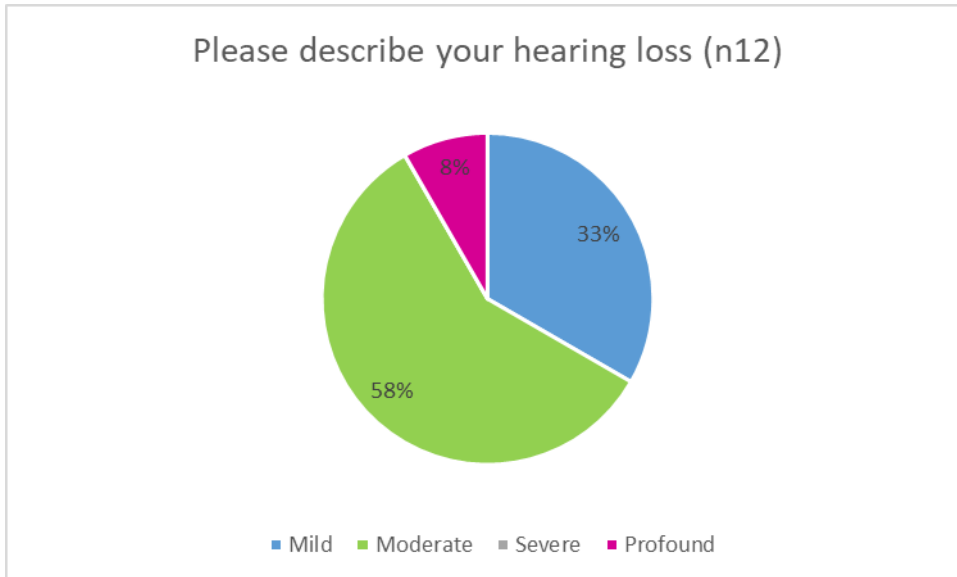
### Please rate your overall experience (n12)

50% rated their experience of using Specsavers audiology services as excellent, 33% described the service as good and a further 17% rated the service as Ok. No body described the service as poor or very poor.



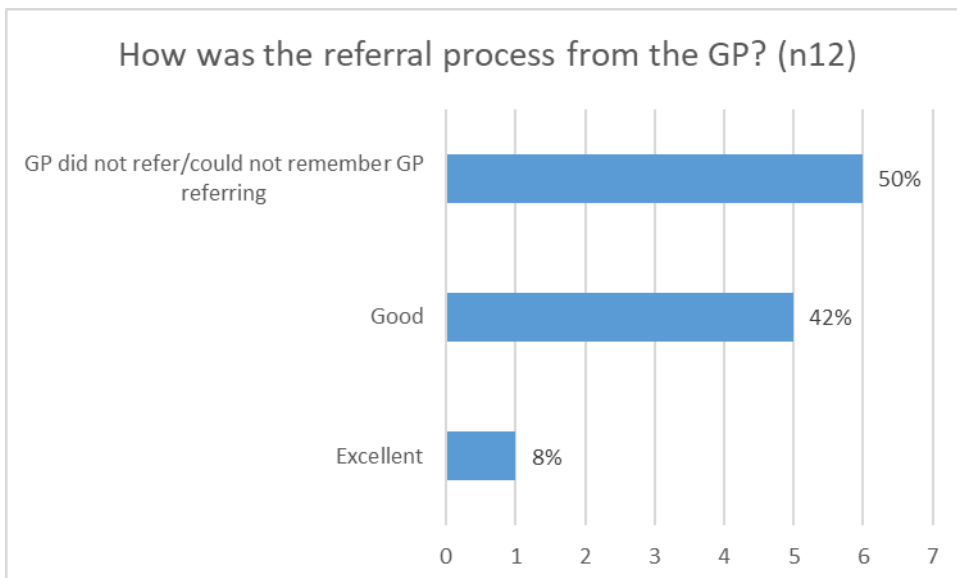
### Please describe your hearing loss (n12)

The majority of people told us they experienced mild (33%) or moderate (58%) hearing loss, 8% described their hearing loss as profound.



### How was the referral process from your GP to Specsavers (n12)?

42% told us the referral process was good, 8% described it as excellent and a further 50% told us the GP had not referred them.



## Comments

*"I told the GP where I wanted to go."*

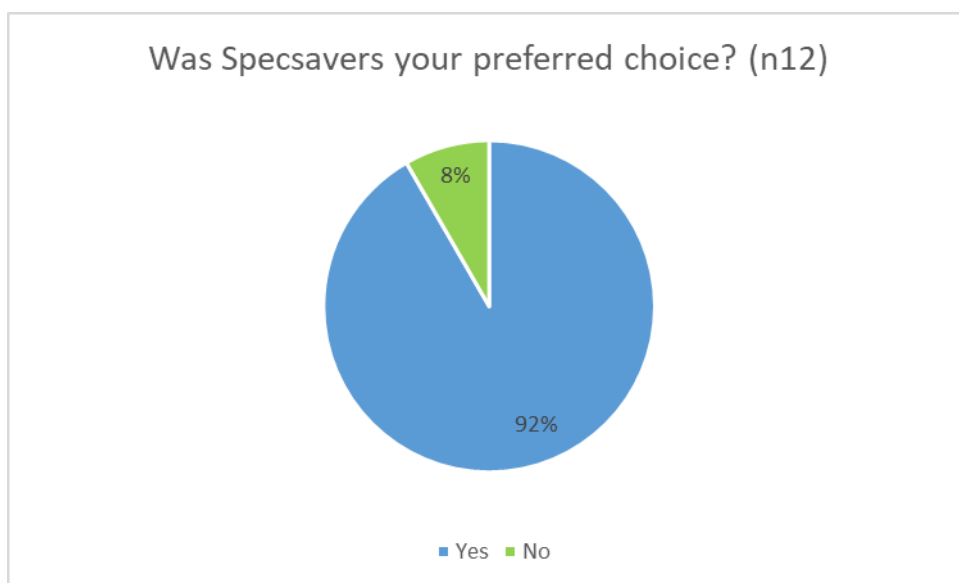
*"Decided to come here myself."*

*"Doctor referred me because I needed better hearing aids. Service better here than privately."*

*"First appointment 3 years ago, walk in fitted up with hearing aids but never contacted again. This time requested the GP referred me to Queen Mary's but this was declined. Received a letter from Specsavers for a review, not sure if this was triggered by the GP request or not."*

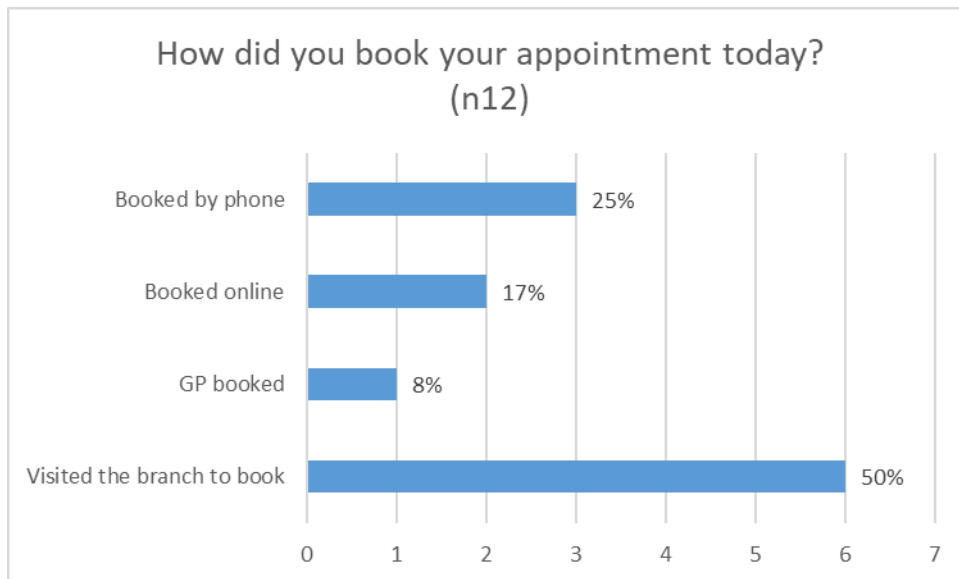
## Was Specsavers your preferred choice (n12)?

For 92% Specsavers was their preferred choice of audiology service, 8% would have chosen to go elsewhere.



## How was your appointment booked for you today (n12)?

50% reported visiting the branch in person to book their appointment, 25% booked over the phone, 17% booked online and 8% were told by their GP when their appointment would be.



### Comments

*“Online booking is easy.”*

*“Booked face to face whilst wife was having her sight test.”*

*“Telephone number on my letter didn’t work. Called another number who were supposed to call back but didn’t. Eventually I booked in person at the branch.”*

*“GP told me when my appointment would be.”*

### Is this your preferred method of booking (n11)?

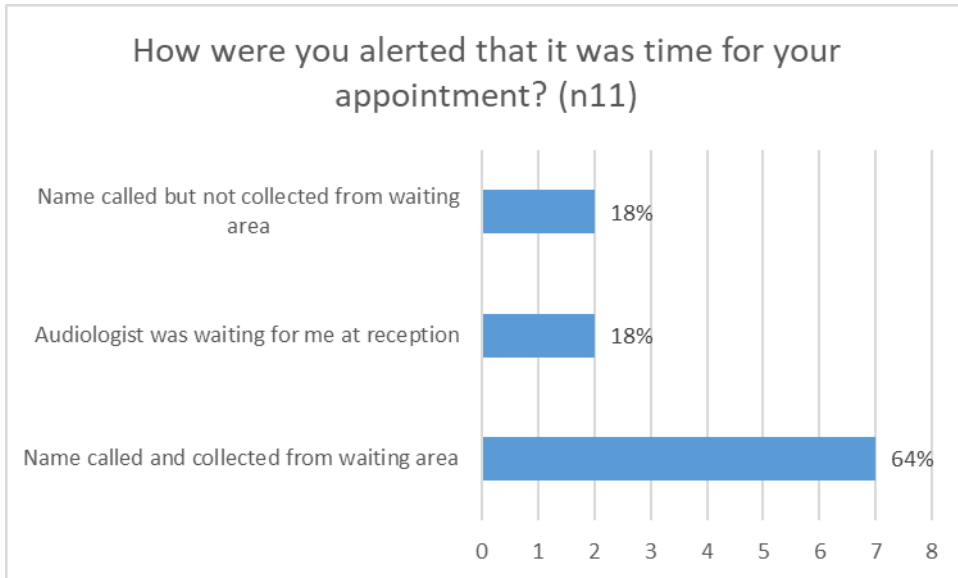
91% preferred the method of booking they had used but one person told us they would prefer to telephone and book an appointment.

### How did you check in to your appointment today (n12)?

All we listened too today had checked in face to face with reception.

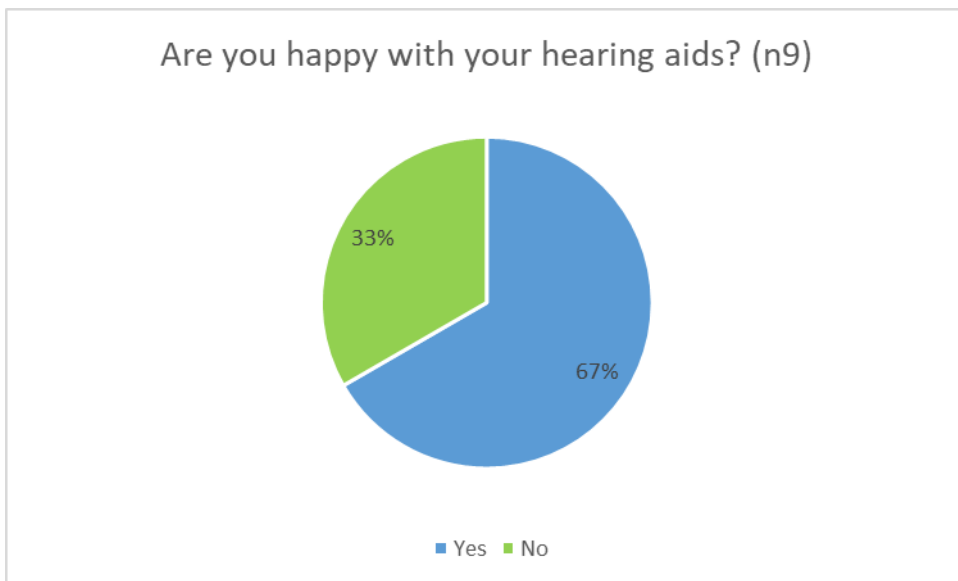
### How were you alerted that it was time to go in to see the audiologist (n11)?

64% were alerted that it was time to go in for their appointment as either the audiologist or receptionist collected them from the waiting area and took them to the audiology room. 18% were met and greeted by the audiologist as they checked into reception, they were then taken straight into their appointment. 18% told us their name was called either by reception or the audiologist.



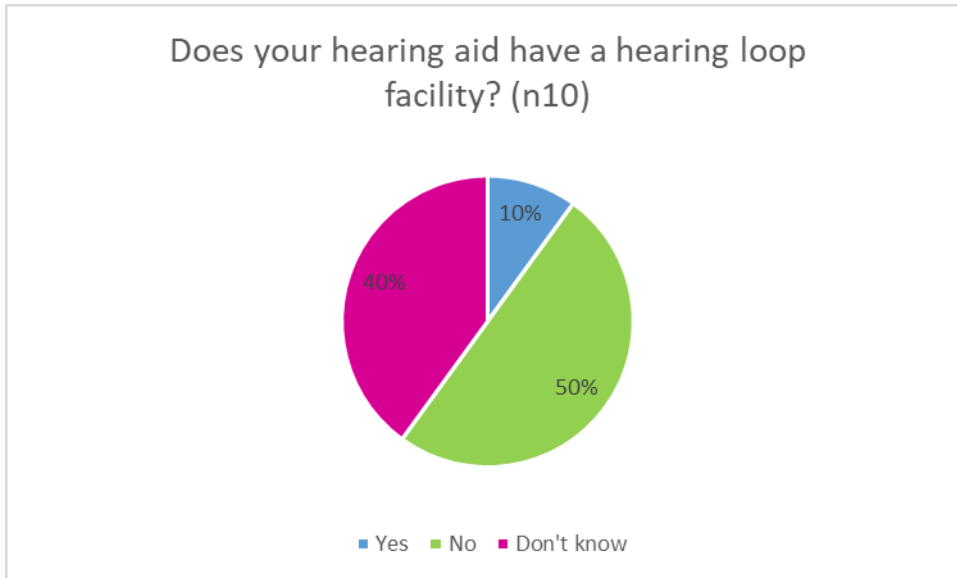
**Are you happy with your hearing aids (n9)**

67% reported that they were happy with their hearing aids, 33% were not happy.



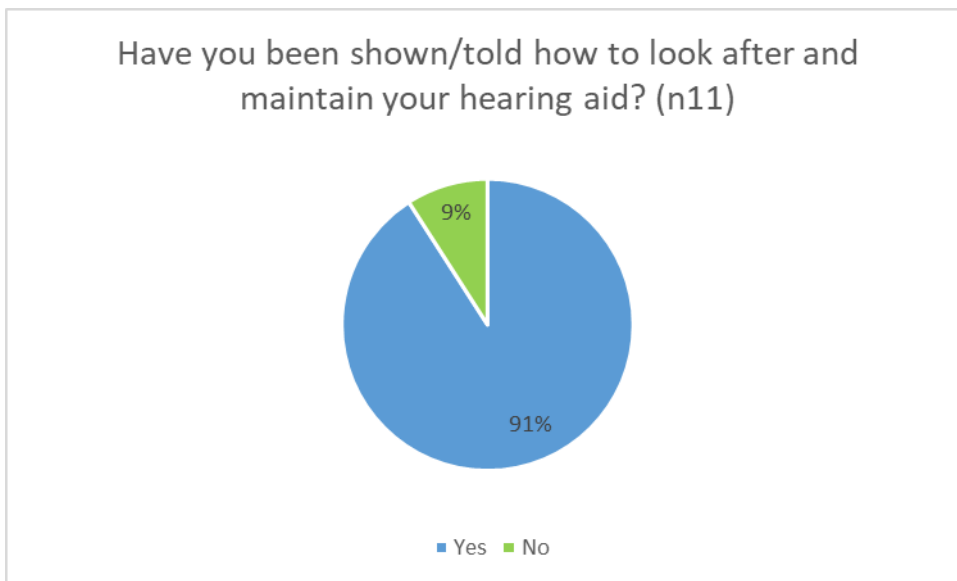
**Does your hearing aid have a hearing loop facility (n10)**

50% told us their hearing aids did not have a hearing loop facility, 10% told us they had a hearing loop facility and 40% were not sure if they had this or not.



**Have you been shown/told how to maintain and look after your hearing aid (n11)?**

91% had been shown how to look after and maintain their hearing aid, 9% told us that they had not been shown or told how to do this.



**Comments**

*“Received guidance for my old ones so will have some idea about the new ones. However, the audiologist did say that a fitting and maintenance appointment would be made for me.”*

*“If I have any problems I can always go back to the shop.”*

*“It’s quite easy and I have been told to book regular service appointments.”*

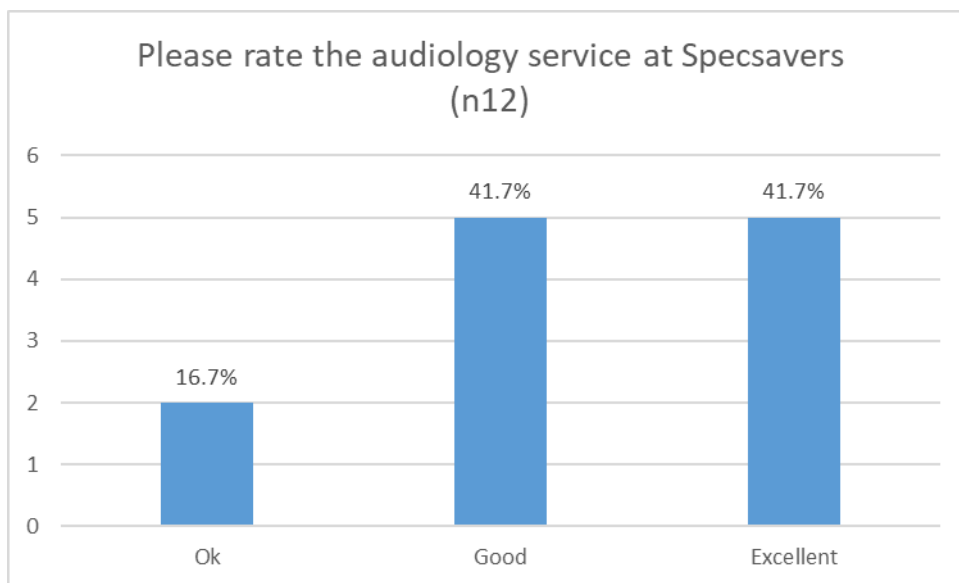
*“Happy to maintain myself but I did have a service appointment today and the audiologist cleaned my aids thoroughly and changed the batteries.”*

*“Happy to do this myself. If I do have a problem they have always helped me very quickly. The audiologist is very helpful, and assured me the aids need to be adjusted and then will work better.”*

*“I know what to do as been wearing a hearing aid for some time.”*

**Please rate your audiology service (n12)**

42% rated Specsavers audiology service as excellent and a further 42% rated Specsavers audiology service as good, 17% rated it as Ok. No one rated the service as poor or very poor.



**What has been good about your experience today (n10)**

*“It was convenient, quick, no waiting.”*

*“Prompt appointment no hanging around.”*

*“Very smooth, all running on time. Had a double appointment for glasses as well and timings all went to plan.”*

*“Personalised service. I had a problem with a dome from the aid being stuck in my ear (in the past). Came to Specsavers who told me to go to urgent care and the Dome was removed. Today the audiologist remembered it was me which makes the service feel very individual.”*

*“Overall a good experience. I am claustrophobic and cannot sit in the hearing chamber. It is no trouble for my test to be done outside the chamber.”*

*“Been seen so quickly. I’ve always been pleased with my visits.”*



*“Good experience, no waiting, polite helpful staff.”*

*“Able to discuss hearing aid with audiologist.....happy to take advice of a professional.”*

**Is there anything that would have improved your experience today (n10)**

*“Couldn’t wish for anything better.”*

*“Continuity of seeing same audiologist.”*

*“Calling back when promised, being seen on time....would have preferred to be retested but happy to take advice of professional.”*

**Are you satisfied with the aftercare service (n9)?**

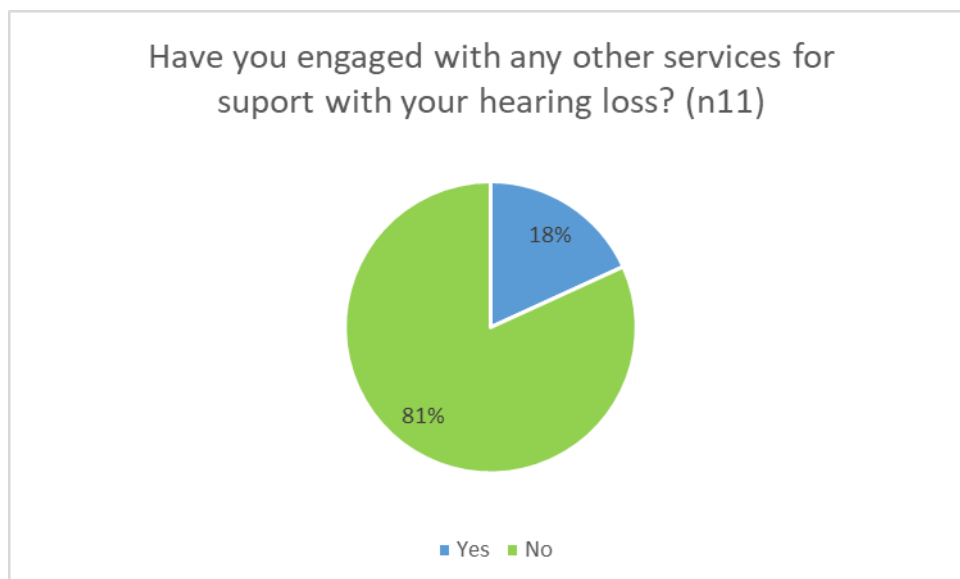
100% told us they were happy with the aftercare service they received.

*“Aware of a drop in clinic but have not needed to use it yet.”*

*“The audiologist remembers me which make it feel more like a personal service.”*

**Have you engaged with any other services for support with your hearing loss (n11)?**

82% had not sought any other form of services offering support with hearing loss, one person had visited a private provider of hearing aids and one had visited Queen Mary’s hospital.



## Conclusion

On the days we visited Specsavers audiology clinics, the 12 people we engaged with told us that Specsavers was their preferred choice of NHS audiology service provider and that they were happy with the service, with the majority describing it as good or excellent. They liked the convenience of being able to walk in to the branch to book appointments in person or call to book appointments over the telephone. One person described how it was convenient to have audiology and eye tests in one location and that he had an appointment for both that day. The patients we spoke to told us the location of the branch they were visiting was convenient and generally easy to get to. Patients generally described the referral process as good, being able to get appointments easily and described the service as quick and efficient with little waiting. Patients described being easily able to get appointments generally without a long wait, which is in line with NHS England's Commissioning Framework (2016) which suggests waits should be less than seven weeks (36 days).

In an example of good practice, patients told us how they were sometimes met at reception by the audiologist which made them feel welcome and that audiologists often remembered them making the service feel more personal. Whilst in the waiting area audiologists were observed both approaching clients and calling their names when it was time to go into their appointment which prevented respondents missing appointments. However, one person did tell us that their name was just called which could potentially have been a problem if they had not heard it, particularly if the branch had been busier and noisier.

Only 67% of respondents told us they were happy with their NHS hearing aids but no explanation was given as to why they were not happy. If people are not happy with their hearing aids they may be discouraged from wearing them. According to Action for Hearing Loss (2020), hearing aids can improve a person's quality of life helping decrease feelings of isolation and aid with communication as well as having other benefits. However, benefits will only be achieved if people are happy with their hearing aids and wear them. After the initial fitting of hearing aids, follow up appointments are important to make sure people are happy with their hearing aids and regularly wearing them. Advice that the hearing aids may take a while to get used to and learning to deal with new sounds, are vital to ensure continued use of the aids (Action for Hearing Loss, 2020). Action for Hearing Loss suggests that people may believe hearing aids are not suitable for them and give up rather than take time to adjust to the new hearing aids.

Learning to look after and maintain hearing aids is important to ensure they work effectively and efficiently and over 90% of patients had been told how to look and maintain their hearing aids.

Most NHS hearing aids have or can have a hearing loop (T setting) which can be activated by the audiologist and then switched on and off as required by the patient. The hearing loop (audio induction loop) provides a magnetic, wireless signal picked up by a hearing aid when the T-setting is switched on (Hearing Link, 2020). When the hearing loop setting is switched on, patients will be able to hear more clearly over background noise. Hearing loops are often found in public places such as theatres, hospitals, GP Practices and other public places such as banks. Only half of the patients at Specsavers told us they had a hearing aid with a

hearing loop setting and a further 40% did not know if their hearing aid had this important feature or how to use it.

More companies are being encouraged to have hearing loop systems fitted, under the Accessible Information Standard (NHS, 2017), so that the services they offer are more accessible to those with hearing loss (Action for Hearing Loss, 2020). In 2012, the charity Hearing Link launched a campaign 'Let's loop the UK' to promote and improve hearing loop provision (Hearing Link, 2020). Patients should be made aware of the benefits of using a hearing loop, such as being able to hear more clearly over background noise and how to use a hearing loop, so that they can make an informed choice and decide if they want one or not. If patients are not sure what a hearing loop is they cannot make an informed choice.

The majority of patients had not engaged with any other services or accessed support for their hearing loss. Action for Hearing Loss (2020) suggests lip-reading and communication tactics are an important skill for people with hearing loss as it can improve communication and help people manage their hearing loss better. Lip-reading and living with hearing loss courses are available in the borough and support can be offered locally by Bexley Deaf Centre (Bexley Deaf Centre, 2020) and nationally through the charity Action for Hearing Loss.

## Recommendations

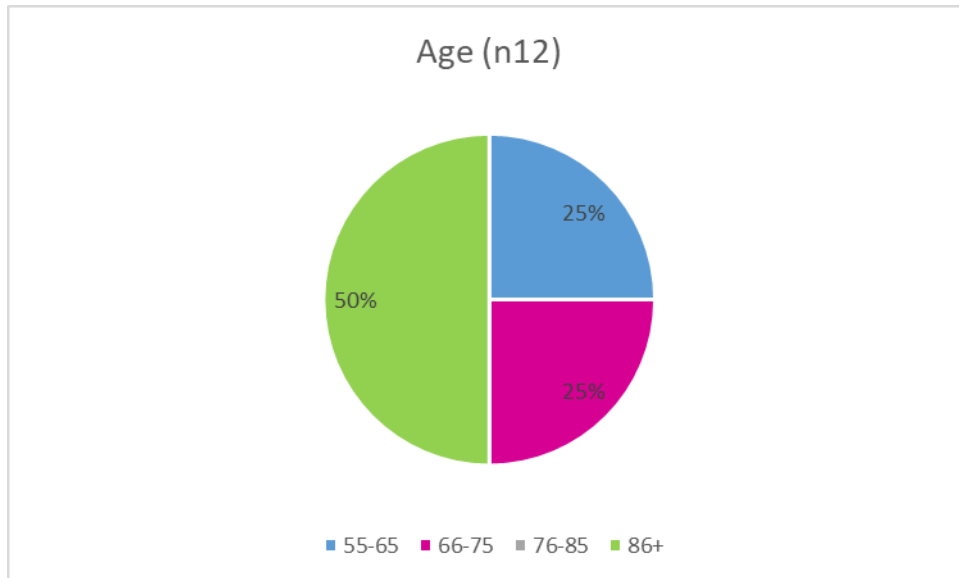
- Specsavers could promote the use of the hearing loop setting on hearing aids and increase patients knowledge of what a hearing loop is and how it may help patients to hear more clearly. Understanding and usage of the hearing loop setting could be checked at follow up and aftercare appointments to make sure patients fully understand usage.
- Patients told us they were generally happy with the service at Specsavers, but only 66% were happy with their NHS hearing aids. Specsavers should continue to collect patient experience feedback, paying particular attention to why patients may not be happy with their hearing aids. This will allow Specsavers to explore what they can do to increase patient satisfaction and encourage continued use, so that patients get the full benefits of wearing hearing aids.
- Signage to show the branch has a hearing loop should be more prominently displayed.

## **References**

- NHS England (2017) Accessible information Standard Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/accessibleinfo/> (Accessed: 28/01/2020)
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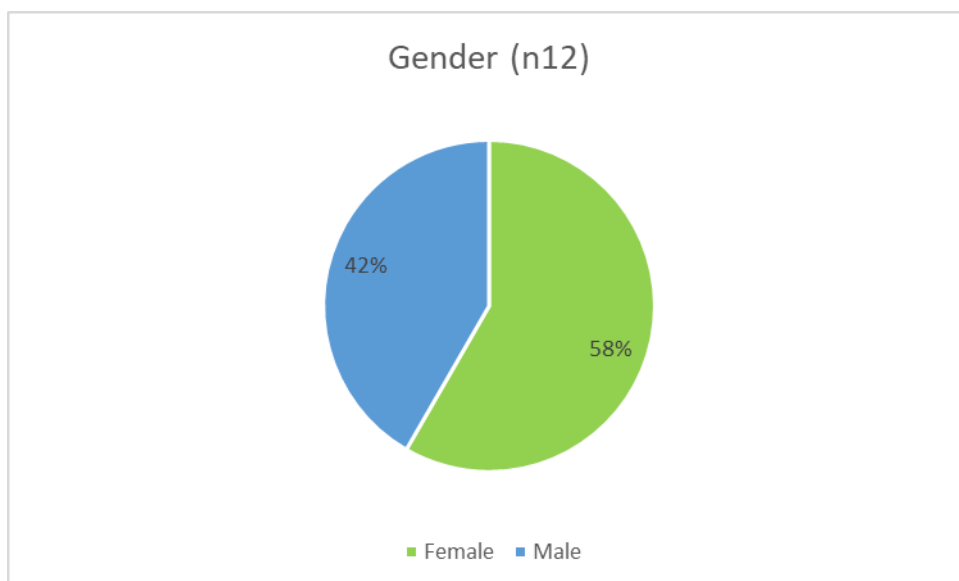
**Appendix 1**  
**Demographics (Specsavers Audiology)**

**Age**



The majority of questionnaire respondents (50%) were aged 86+, 25 % were aged between 66-75 and 55-65 years of age.

**Gender**



58% of respondents were female and 42% male.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Service Provider and Commissioner Responses**

#### **Specsavers Bexleyheath and Erith**

Thank you very much for providing a copy of the report.

I am pleased to see that you found that most people were happy with the service they received. I was disappointed to hear that some found aftercare to be lacking. We are always keen to point out to patients that if they do have any difficulty with their hearing aids that they can pop in for minor repairs by shop floor staff or, if it requires adjustment or more complex repairs, that they can book an appointment with an audiologist at any time. Many of our patients do just this.

I will look at ways in which we can improve on this matter for our patients and will strive to make sure that our patients get the most from our hearing aids. I will also be sure to discuss with my clinicians how useful it can be for patients to have access to the loop system and will ensure that all patients receive adequate instruction on how to get the most from it.

I share the frustrations of some with the referral process as it is still difficult for patients to gain access to services and to know what their rights are in terms of choosing their provider. It is also very difficult for us to then have to explain to patients why it is that we cannot proceed with hearing aids without first receiving a referral from their GP. I believe that a self-referral system in much the same way as the General Optical Services voucher scheme would probably be a much easier system to operate, would provide patients with a greater sense of choice and involvement in their care and would ease the burden on the already stretched primary care service provided by our GPs.

Thank you again for your incredible work in producing this report and for the opportunity to improve in areas that really matter to patients.

I look forward to continued constructive dialogue in the future.

Stefan Carney, Audiology Partner, Specsavers Bexleyheath.

18 February 2020

#### **Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group**

Thank you for sharing the Healthwatch audiology reports with me.

Having read them I have the following observations:

1) I note about the recommendation regarding the Hearing Loop – i.e. training for patient, being asked if the patient wants it activated and checking at the aftercare appointment if the Hearing Loop is required/working etc.

2) Please note the following Audiology Providers for Bexley CCG:

Heasebase: based in Bexley NEW (187 Broadway), Chislehurst, St. Marys Cray, The Albion and Home Visits

Outside Clinic: Home Visits Only

Scrivens: The Albion, 154 Rushy Green (Catford)

Lewisham & Greenwich Trust: Queen Mary's Sidcup

Specsavers: Bexley, Bromley, Eltham, Orpington, Sidcup and Erith

3) Earwax: Housebound via District nurse team via GP referral following referral criteria/guidelines.

4) A new GP comms regarding the Audiology services is due to be sent to the GPs this week.

5) I will raise your concerns regarding aftercare with Specsavers and increase patient satisfaction/experience and will highlight the fact that the Hearing loop is not advertised in the Bexley location.

I hope the above is helpful.

Susan Davis,  
Project Support & System Performance Manager  
Community,  
Integrated Contracts and Improvement Team  
2 March 2020