Deaf and hard of hearing

If you have hearing loss or a hearing impairment you can find local support and equipment.

It is common for people over the age of 60 years old to develop hearing loss. Reasons for hearing loss can include wax blocking the ear canal, age related changes, or brain damage. Over time the ear gradually deteriorates and this affects the majority of older people and affects everyone to varying degrees.

Signs of hearing loss

You may be losing your hearing if you:

- misunderstand people or need to ask them to repeat things
- think people are mumbling
- don't hear the doorbell or the telephone ringing
- need to turn the volume up on the television or radio and receive complaints
- find it difficult to hear at social gatherings or when there is some background noise, even though other people manage to have conversations.
- miss your name being called, for example at your GP's surgery.

The Royal Institute for the Deaf (RNID) provide information and advice on signs of hearing loss.

What to do if you think you have a hearing loss

If you think that you have a hearing loss, the first thing to do is to visit your GP and explain your concerns about your hearing. It is helpful to give examples of situations when you have difficulty. They can shine a light in your ears to see if wax is the problem.

If your GP can find no obvious cause for your hearing loss, they will refer you to the audiology clinic or ear, nose and throat department of your local hospital to have hearing tests. You can self refer for a hearing test at the Freeman Hospital by contacting Audiology or through your GP.

After the hearing tests, the audiologist will explain your test results and will discuss whether hearing aids are likely to help you, or whether you could have some other form of treatment.

The Royal Institute for the Deaf (RNID) have an online hearing checker where you can check your hearing range. It's not the same as a full hearing test carried out by an audiologist (hearing specialist), but it's a quick and reliable way to find out if you need one.

Ear health

Problems with your ears such as ear wax build up can be painful and frustrating. Without treatment it can effect your balance and hearing. **Read more on InformationNOW about how to keep your ears healthy.**

Coping with hearing loss

When you are experiencing problems with your hearing you are faced with other problems too. Social isolation can be a major problem and you may find that you withdraw from activities that you were involved in as they become too difficult.

There are a number of practical aids to help you with daily living including:

- equipment to make the sound from your television or radio clearer
- talking amplified telephones
- alerting devices, for example a flashing light to alert you when someone rings your doorbell.
- smoke alarm
- text phones
- **text relay** offers text-to-speech and speech-to-text translation services. A relay assistant in a call centre acts as an intermediary, enabling people with hearing or speech impairments to communicate with other people over the telephone.

The Royal Institute for the Deaf (RNID) have a range of fact sheets with more information on equipment.

Disability North can provide information on equipment and aids that may be useful.

Adult Social CarePoint can put you in touch with the sensory support team at the council who offer practical support to improve your daily living..

Some specific hearing problems

Tinnitus

Tinnitus is often described as ringing, whistling, humming or buzzing in the ears or head. It is experienced by over seven million people in the UK and can cause severe distress and suffering.

Simple techniques and equipment, ranging from relaxation tips to sound therapies, can provide distraction from the noises of tinnitus and can be used to manage the condition.

More information, support and advice is available from **The British Tinnitus Association**. They also provide a short online taster session to support people newly diagnosed with tinnitus – takeontinnitus.co.uk.

Acoustic Shock

Acoustic shock happens when unannounced sounds travel though a telephone line to your handset or headset. These sounds are materially different to normal speech and often resemble a bang or a clang. The resulting symptoms can include pain, tinnitus, hypersensitivity to noise, imbalance or anxiety/depression. These symptoms start shortly after the incident and may fade within a few hours. However, they can last for a considerable amount of time, leading to significant disability.

If you have had an acoustic shock injury at work, for example in a call centre, you can find out more information on the **Health and Safety Executive** website.

Labyrinthitis

Labyrinthitis is an inner ear infection that causes a delicate structure deep inside your ear called the labyrinth to become inflamed. This can affect your hearing and balance.

The most common symptoms are:

- dizziness
- hearing loss
- vertigo

Other symptoms can include ear pain, nausea, headaches, a feeling of pressure in your ear and tinnitus.

In most cases, Labyrinthitis will clear itself up within a few weeks. However, you might need some medication to help you cope with the symptoms, or to fight the infection in more severe cases.

British Sign Language (BSL)

British Sign language is a visual means of communicating using gestures, facial expressions and body language. Sign language is used mainly by deaf people and people with hearing difficulties.

Subtitles and live captioning

Some television programmes have **subtitles** or text on screen which describes the spoken word and sounds taking place during a programme.

There are options to use captions on many online services including YouTube, Skype, Teams and you could download **LiveTranscribe.**

Stagetext provides captioning and live speech-to-text services in theatres and other arts and cultural venues.

Cinemas have subtitled screenings. Carers can go free with the **Cinema Exhibitors Association Card.**

Hearing aids, repairs and batteries

If you're having problems with your hearing **talk to your GP** who can refer you for a hearing assessment. A hearing aid may help to improve what you can hear now and prevent further hearing loss in the future. There are different types of hearing aid available and you may be able to get **hearing aids for free or on long term long from the NHS.**

You can buy a hearing aid privately from some high street shops including Boots and Specsavers . Some shops offer free hearing tests and replacement hearing aid batteries.

The Hearing Aid Repair Service at The Freeman Hospital can provide replacement batteries, tubes and repairs. This service is for Audiology patients of The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust only.

Lip reading

Depending on your hearing loss, a hearing aid may or may not be appropriate. Lip reading and the extent to which it is useful depends on how clearly someone speaks. When a hearing aid and lip reading are used together, it can have a positive impact on your ability to communicate with people. Lip reading classes can also offer people you opportunity to meet other people in the same situation. Find out about local classes through your library, Action on Hearing Loss or Hearing Link using the contact details in the list of organisations on the right.

Ears, Nose and Throat (ENT) and urgent care services

Ear, Nose and Throat Services (ENT) at The Freeman Hospital provide a range of specialist services including:

- Audiology and Hearing Aid Service
- **The ENT casualty clinic** which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for Emergency GP referrals for adults and children. This is not a walk in service.
- Ear infections (chronic) and hearing loss
- Glue ear
- Treacher Collins syndrome and hearing loss
- Grommets
- Otosclerosis and stapedotomy
- Speech and Language Therapy services

Local help and support

Deaflink are a dedicated organisation in the North East that will support you to access employment, leisure activities and they offer support groups and an advocacy service.

Hearing LINK campaigns to raise public awareness of the needs and rights of hard of hearing and deaf people; provides information to individuals, professionals and other organisations; and offers advice and support to people experiencing problems relating to hearing loss.

North Regional Association for Sensory Support (NRASS) provides a free advocacy scheme for people with hearing and sight loss. They can offer you support with information on how you can stand up for your rights, and they can be your 'voice' if you don't have the confidence to stand up for yourself in formal situations.

Newcastle Deaf Centre welcomes deaf people of all ages to social, pastoral and wellbeing sessions. They have a Lunch club, 'Skill up' sessions for women, social gatherings and Mass in their chapel on Sundays.

Interpreters and translation

British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters are available to help with can be arranged using video calls for:

- **NHS 111 British Sign Language interpretation**
- **999 BSL video calls**

Emergency SMS Service If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired people register your mobile phone and you can send a text message for help to the UK 999 service. It will be passed to the police, ambulance, fire rescue, or coastguard. The emergency services can then reply to you by text.

Read more about interpretation and translation.

Other useful information

The Accessible Information Standard is a UK law to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are given information they can easily read or understand. Health and social care services must find out your information and communication needs make sure you get support the way you need it in an accessible format.

For example you may ask for texts instead of phone calls for appointments or a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter at medical appointments for communication.

Read more about Accessible information

The Royal Institute for the Deaf (RNID) has a range of helpful fact sheets on ear problems.

Crisis Text text **DEAF** to **85258** for free and immediate support from EE, O2, Three and Vodafone, BT Mobile, Tesco Mobile, Virgin Mobile, iD Mobile, Sky, Telecom Plus, Lebara and GiffGaff. Even if it says there is a charge, it isn't, it is free.

New claim line for Universal Credit if you are deaf or hard of hearing.

> Please note – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact **NHS 111**. In an emergency, dial text **999**.

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Useful Organisations

Disability North

Email: reception@disabilitynorth.org.uk

Website: www.disabilitynorth.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 2840480

Address: The Dene Centre, NE3 1PH

Hearing LINK

Email: helpdesk@hearinglink.org

Website: http://www.hearinglink.org

Telephone: 01844 348111

Address: The Grange, Wycombe Road, HP27 9NS

Adult Social CarePoint at Newcastle City Council

Email: ASCP@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/AdultSocialCare

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Adult Social CarePoint Newcastle City Council, NE4 9LU

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)

Email: contact@rnid.org.uk

Website: https://rnid.org.uk/

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: RNID, Brightfield Business Centre, PE2 6XU

Disability Equipment Service

Email: team@disabilityequipmentservice.co.uk

Website: https://disabilityequipmentservice.co.uk/

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Becoming Visible

Email: hello@becomingvisible.org.uk

Website: www.becomingvisible.co.uk

Telephone: 0191 233 0999

Address: Becoming Visible, SR5 1AH

North Regional Association for Sensory Support (NRASS)

Email: office@nrass.org.uk

Website: www.nrass.org

Telephone: 0191 233 0999

Address: The Pinetree Centre, DH3 2TD

Deaflink

Email: admin@deaflink.org.uk

Website: https://www.deaflink.org.uk/

Telephone: 0191 233

Address: Deaflink North East, NE3 3XT

Sensory Support Service – Newcastle City Council

Email: communication.support.service@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/adults/adult-care-services/sensory-support-services

Telephone: 0191 278 8377

Address: Sensory Support Service, Community Health and Social Care Direct, NE4 9LU

Disability Rights UK

Email: enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

Website: www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Telephone: 0330 995 0400

Address: Plexal, 14 East Bay Lane , E20 3BS

Signature

Email: enquiries@signature.org.uk

Website: www.signature.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 383 1155

Address: Mersey House, DH1 1TH

STAGETEXT

Email: enquiries@stagetext.org

Website: www.stagetext.org

Telephone: 020 7377 0540

Address: Stagetext, CO1 1PT

Relay UK Emergency SMS Service

Website: https://www.relayuk.bt.com/how-to-use-relay-uk/contact-999-using-relay-uk.html

Telephone: 18000

North East British Sign Language English Interpreters

Email: paulhann@me.com

Website: http://www.northeast-bslenglish-interpreters.co.uk

Telephone: 07790 959 884

Address: 24 Henry Street, NE3 1DQ

NHS 111

Website: www.nhs.uk/111

Telephone: 07790 959 884

Ear, Nose and Throat Services (ENT) at The Freeman Hospital

Email: tnu-tr.audiology@nhs.net

Website: https://www.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk/services/ear-nose-throat-service-ent/

Telephone: 0191 213 7633

Address: Freeman Road, NE7 7DN

The British Tinnitus Association

Email: info@tinnitus.org.uk

Website: http://www.tinnitus.org.uk/

Telephone: 0114 250 9933

Address: The British Tinnitus Association, S8 0TB

SignHealth

Email: info@signhealth.org.uk

Website: https://signhealth.org.uk/

Telephone: 020 394 72600

Address: CAN Mezzanine Ltd , N1 6AH

Cinemas Exhibitors Association (CEA) Card

Email: info@ceacard.co.uk

Website: www.ceacard.co.uk

Telephone: 01244 526016

Address: CEA Card, CH7 5BW

Newcastle Deaf Centre

Email: deafcentre@svp.org.uk

Website: https://svp.org.uk/microsite/svp-deaf-centre-newcastle

Telephone: 0191 232 4104

Address: Newcastle Deaf Centre, NE4 6EE

Related Articles

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

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Your Doctor or GP

Theatres

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Making your computer or mobile device easier to use

Mobile phones

Interpreting and translation

British Sign Language and subtitles

Cinemas

Ear health

Accessible information