

## Programme Update

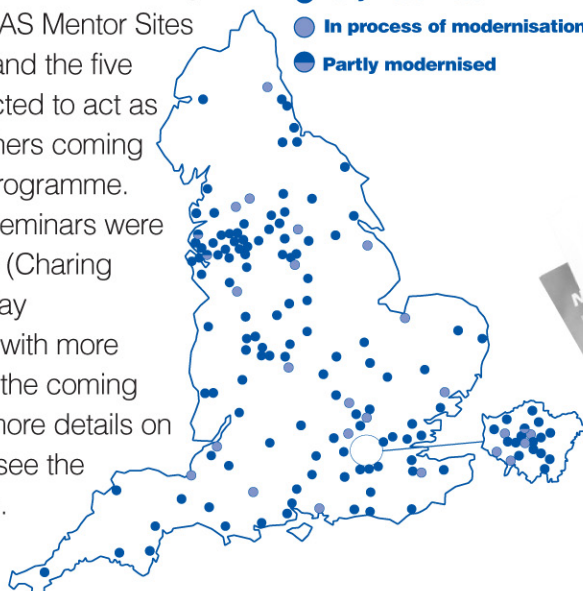
**The start of the 2004/5 financial year saw the remaining 26 hearing aid services in England enter the 'Modernising Hearing Aid Services' (MHAS) programme.** Since 2000, more than 130 services have been modernised and by the end of March next year all areas should be delivering the new service and providing digital hearing aids.

We have seen excellent uptake of the opportunity to join the National Framework Contract (PPP), with forty-one NHS Trusts accepted onto the programme for 2004. Sites which opted not to participate originally now have a last opportunity to do so, with extra funding having been released. This opportunity is available to all 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th wave sites who are not currently involved in the initiative and who will be fitting digital aids by January 2005. All sites were sent information on how to apply in late May with a closing date of 16th June.

As you can read in this newsletter, the audit of the initial Hearing Direct pilot has now been completed, with encouraging results. The pilot has now been extended to include an additional three services.

In the last newsletter, we told you about the MHAS Mentor Sites programme, and the five services selected to act as mentors to others coming through the programme. The first two seminars were held in March (Charing Cross) and May (Winchester), with more planned over the coming months. For more details on Mentor sites, see the mhas website.

- Fully modernised
- In process of modernisation
- Partly modernised

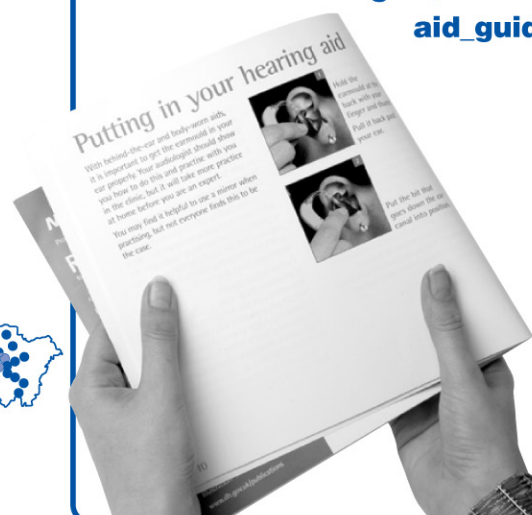


## How to Use Your Hearing Aid

Those who attended the MHAS Today and Tomorrow conference have seen preliminary copies of the new 'How to Use Your Hearing Aid' booklet, which has been newly revised and updated by RNID on behalf of the Department of Health. The booklet is designed to be a patient friendly introduction to the care and use of hearing aids, and should be given out to all new users.

**To obtain copies for your department, please contact** the DH publications orderline on 08701 555 455, and quote reference 34789/How to Use Your Hearing Aid. A PDF version of the document is available at:

**[www.rnid.org.uk/hearing\\_aid\\_guide](http://www.rnid.org.uk/hearing_aid_guide)**



# MHAS Finances

**As you are aware, this is the last year in which we at the MHAS Programme Office will be centrally managing the Department of Health (DH) budget for this Programme.**

In order to meet external timescales, we have had to make sure the vast majority of this year's funding was allocated by July, so apologies if we have been chasing some of you recently to confirm figures.

Please be reassured that 2005/06 is NOT the end of MHAS funding. The cash does not dry up on 1st April, honestly.

During this summer, we will be devising a model, based on your previous MHAS activity, including additional participation in the various initiatives, which will be used to allocate funding for 2005/06. We expect the budget will cover all of your core MHAS work with some flexibility to continue with initiatives where appropriate.

Once we have finished the calculations, these will be passed to the DH with a recommendation that they allocate those sums to your lead Primary Care Trust (PCT) for revenue (staffing) and your Strategic Health Authority (SHA) for capital (hearing aids). It is our intention to copy these figures to your heads of service and PCT lead contact for information.

It is however true to say that the funding will become part of the PCT general baseline allocation and will not be ring fenced for Audiology as it has been in previous years. It is now our joint responsibility to ensure the PCTs are aware of the benefits of MHAS and the reasons why they must continue to pass that funding on in full to you as service providers.

As part of that process, during May and June we held a series of Roadshows across England to promote MHAS with PCTs and SHAs. The key objectives were to explain how MHAS came about and outline some of the programme's national achievements, including initiatives that have evolved during the course of the programme such as PPP, Hearing Direct and Capacity Initiatives. We also invited a local representative from the NHS to talk to the group about what MHAS has meant for them and for the users of the service.



A big thankyou to all those who took the time to prepare and present their thoughts. Not every local service was invited because we did not want to find ourselves a) unable to accommodate everyone in the venue (admittedly optimistic) or conversely, and perhaps more realistically, b) with only a couple of PCT commissioners seriously outnumbered by audiologists!

The presentations will be available for your own use, if you wish. For example if your PCT did not attend, perhaps you could offer to meet with them personally to talk it through. Please contact your programme manager if you would like to receive a copy.

As we have said on several occasions, MHAS is the beginning, not the end and the money will still be there next April.

# Hearing Direct Update

## **The Hearing Direct Service for adult patients has now been up and running for over 7 months and is proving to be a real success!**

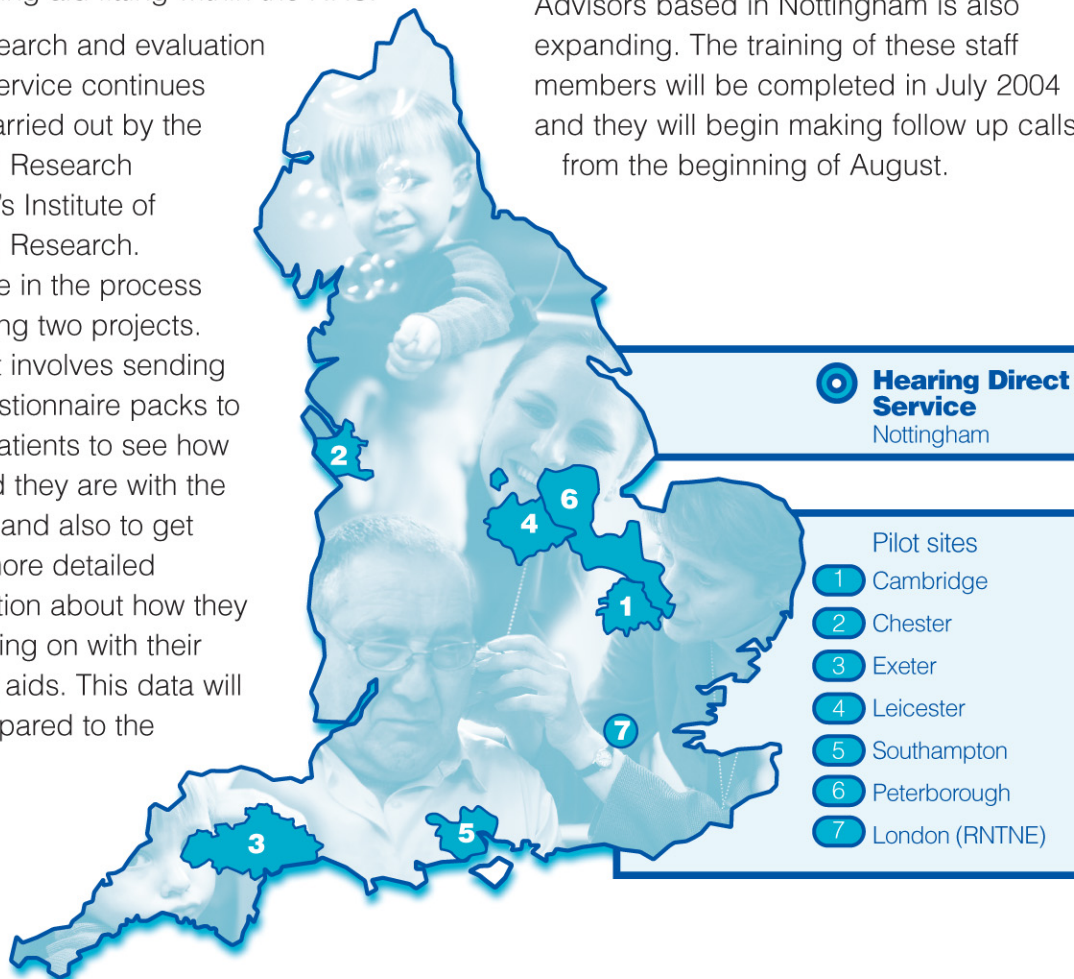
Helen Martin has completed the initial audit of the service and the results show that from October 2003 to March 2004, participating services referred 64% of patients to Hearing Direct with just under 1000 patients receiving follow-up calls. Of the calls that were made, 49% of patients were discharged, as no further intervention was needed, resulting in a 31% decrease in the demand for follow-up appointments. Therefore for a typical department with an activity level of approx 2100 fittings per annum, this gives a reduction of 651 follow up appointments per annum. The audit report clearly shows that Hearing Direct is proving to be a high quality service that has successfully created additional capacity for hearing aid fitting within the NHS.

The research and evaluation of the service continues to be carried out by the Medical Research Council's Institute of Hearing Research. They are in the process of running two projects. The first involves sending out questionnaire packs to some patients to see how satisfied they are with the service and also to get some more detailed information about how they are getting on with their hearing aids. This data will be compared to the

patients who have not been referred to Hearing Direct, to make sure we are achieving equivalent outcomes and satisfaction. The second project is to validate the Glasgow profile questionnaires over the telephone and is involving patients from Kingsmill Hospital. The results from these two projects will be combined with the audit evaluation and published in Autumn 2004.

Due to the success of the project so far the scheme has been rolled out to a further 3 sites: Peterborough, Southampton and The Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital, London. Having set up the IT link between NHS Direct in Nottingham, and staff training completed, these sites began referring their patients to Hearing Direct from the beginning of June.

In response to the rollout of these three services, the team of Hearing Direct Advisors based in Nottingham is also expanding. The training of these staff members will be completed in July 2004 and they will begin making follow up calls from the beginning of August.



# Waiting times

## **Waiting times for Audiology services are expected to remain one of the biggest challenges for a modernised service.**

This is due to the current lack of capacity, no national maximum waiting time requirements, increased pressure from ENT referrals, lengthier appointment times and increasing demand from an ageing population, all of whom deserve access to digital hearing aid technology.

There are no easy solutions to these problems. The MHAS programme has helped by providing additional funding for hearing aid capacity initiatives, the PPP scheme and the Hearing Direct pilot. A new capacity initiative will be available this financial year.

However, not all answers are given by making additional funds available to trusts. Services should also look at how they are managing the patient journey, including the support they provide to ENT. For further assistance on these issues, Action On Audiology comprises a team of experienced Audiologists who can help services investigate how they can improve the existing capacity within their department. They will also be running a “Managing Groups in Audiology” course on 22 September.

MHAS will continue to collect data on waiting times for hearing aid fittings throughout England, with an increased emphasis on the total length of the patient journey from referral to fitting.

## **MHAS Today and Tomorrow**

### **Embarking on the final year of the MHAS programme, the RNID hosted a half day conference exploring what's been learnt since the inception of the programme in 2000 and how to sustain modernisation beyond 2005.**

Held in London on Friday 23rd April, the conference was well attended by over 200 audiologists and education services personnel, from throughout Britain, spanning all four years of the programme. Representatives from the Department of Health, manufacturers, private dispensers, various voluntary organisations, MHAS project partners and professional organisations were also in attendance.

Opening remarks were given by Dr John Low, Chief Executive of RNID and Ian Berry from the Department of Health.

Professor Adrian Davis, Director of Newborn

Hearing Screening and Epidemiology at the MRC Institute of Hearing Research, presented the First Wave Evaluation results. This independent evaluation of MHAS demonstrated the benefits to adult patients of digital signal processing DSP hearing aids and the new service protocols.

John Bamford, Professor of Audiology, Human Communication and Deafness Group at the University of Manchester, and Head of MCHAS team, discussed the evaluation of children's services. Using a range of measures the study found that children's performance with DSP aids was significantly better than with analogue hearing aids, although fitting them was more time consuming and challenging. Findings at the end of the study revealed that 89% of children chose to change to digital aids.

Audiologist Adam Beckman (Team Leader, Adult Rehabilitation/Hearing Aid Centre, RNTNEH) examined the role of REMs & the Glasgow

# Going Digital!

- What to expect from your NHS Audiology service

A new 10-minute DVD, produced by RNID for NHS Audiology services in England, shows the adult patient journey through a modernised service.

Designed to be played in the Outpatient waiting area, it:

- explains the process involved in receiving a digital aid
- identifies the benefits to the user
- explains why more than one appointment is needed
- shows that NHS digital aids are BTE models
- makes it clear that digital hearing aids can take time to get used to

Each NHS Trust may request up to 3 copies of the DVD free of charge. MHAS is currently investigating ways to part-fund those services which do not already have access to a TV/DVD equipment. **Please contact the project office for more information.**

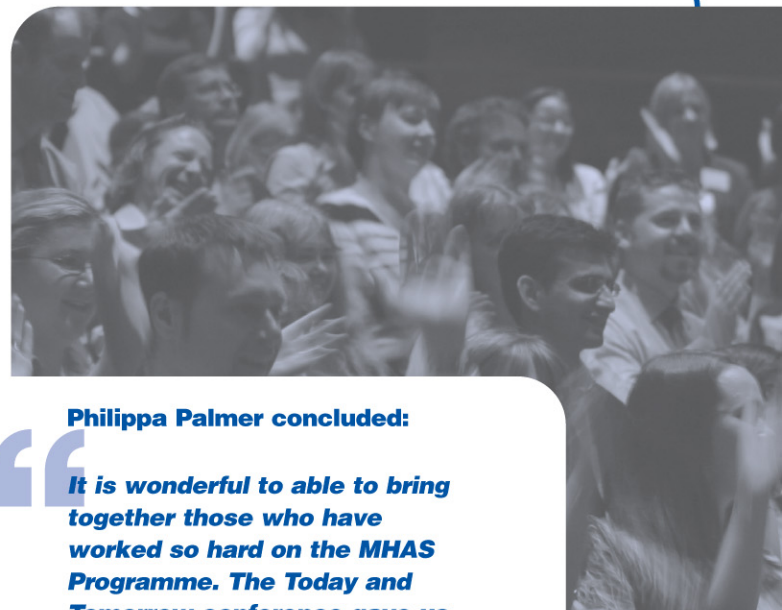


Hearing Aid Benefit Profile within MHAS. Although found to be time consuming by many audiologists, he demonstrated why they are a vital part of the patient journey, ensuring optimum benefit for patients with aids programmed to fit their specific needs.

Alison Holmans of Oxford Radcliffe NHS Trust discussed the role of educational audiologists within MHAS. Her talk highlighted the fact that MHAS trained educational audiologists can save families visits to the clinic, repairing and replacing hearing aids and helping with minor difficulties.

Phil James of Action On Audiology delivered the last presentation. Informative and entertaining, his Ten Top Tips for audiologists stressed the importance of supportive teamwork, patient focus and following protocols.

In the final session of the day, questions were addressed by a panel comprising all speakers, with the addition of Amy McLauchlan, MCHAS Training Team Leader and Chair Philippa Palmer, RNID Director of Health Programmes. See details at: [www.mhas.info](http://www.mhas.info)



**Philippa Palmer concluded:**

***It is wonderful to be able to bring together those who have worked so hard on the MHAS Programme. The Today and Tomorrow conference gave us the opportunity to celebrate our successes and discuss future possibilities. NHS hearing aid services have been revolutionised – our task now is to ensure the modernisation process is sustained so patients continue to enjoy high standards of care and the latest technologies.***



# Update on Scotland

## **In 2003, the Scottish Executive committed £17 million of central funds over four years to support modernisation of hearing aid services in Scotland by 2007.**

Accommodation and equipment are being upgraded and this year there is a strong focus on developing skills. Members of the English MHAS training team are participating in training staff on a modernised patient journey for provision of hearing aids. Seven road shows have been run throughout Scotland to communicate the aims of the modernisation project to patient groups and colleagues in ENT, education and social services. An information leaflet for service users has been published. General allocations to NHS Boards will be increased to cover recurrent costs arising from modernisation beyond 2007.

## Other news

### **MHAS Staff Update**

Philippa Palmer is on maternity leave!

We sadly say farewell to Helen Martin who got the Hearing Direct pilot off the ground with fantastic hard work and enthusiasm. Good Luck to Helen in her new role at Queen's Medical Centre. Claire Evetts now assumes responsibility for the management of Hearing Direct.

## Stop press

RNID wins Charity Awards for MHAS: 'Health and Medical Research' category and 'Overall Winner'

See [www.mhas.info/news](http://www.mhas.info/news) and [www.charityawards.co.uk](http://www.charityawards.co.uk) for more details.

## Contact information

For information or queries on communications, please email Fiona Beckman, MHAS Communications Manager, on [fiona.beckman@rnid.org.uk](mailto:fiona.beckman@rnid.org.uk)

For general MHAS enquires, please use the contact form on the website, [www.mhas.info](http://www.mhas.info), or telephone the programme office on **020 7296 8022**

MHAS member sites should continue to direct all queries to their assigned programme manager.

**The RNID Information Line** is available as a freephone resource for patients.

Telephone **0808 808 0123** Textphone **0808 808 9000**

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for deaf and hard of hearing people