

# YOUR AUDIOLOGY ASSESSMENT INFORMATION LEAFLET



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We will be polite and kind and we expect you to treat our staff in the same way. We will take action against anyone who is verbally, racially, physically or sexually abusive, including stopping access to our services.

## 1. Purpose

This booklet is designed to support you as you prepare for your audiology appointment at any of our [Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust](#) locations. We understand that attending a hearing clinic can feel a bit overwhelming, so we've put this guide together to help you organise your thoughts and questions. By sharing your specific needs with us, you help our clinicians provide the most effective and efficient care possible.

## 2. What should I expect from my hearing assessment?

During your visit, we will guide you through three easy steps:

Step 1 - A Consultation: We'll ask a few questions about your medical history and where you find hearing most difficult.

Step 2 - The Hearing Test: You will wear headphones and press a button every time you hear a sound.

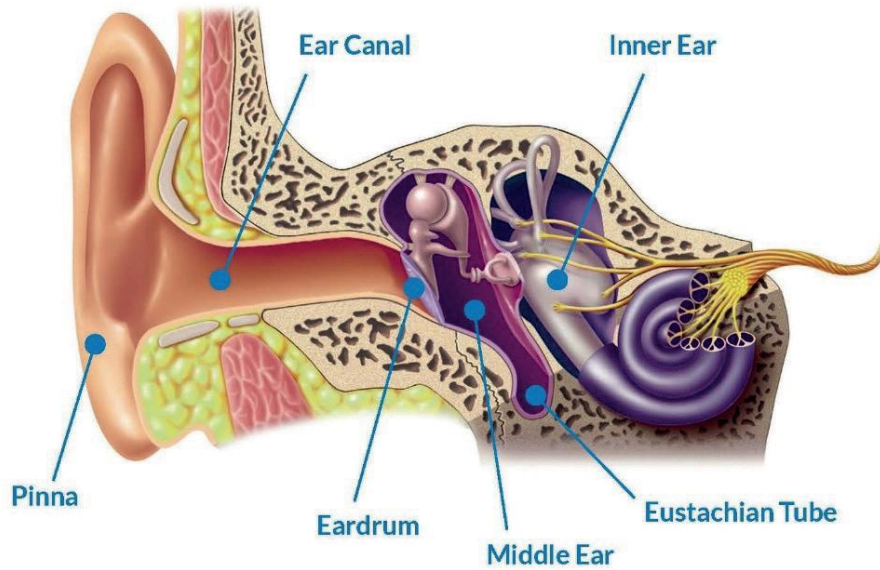
Step 3 - Your Personal Plan: We will explain your results on the spot and work with you to decide on the best next steps, such as a hearing aid or other support.

We understand that a hearing assessment can feel like a lot to take in. You are very welcome to bring a family member, close friend, or carer to your appointment.

## 3. Understanding Your Ears

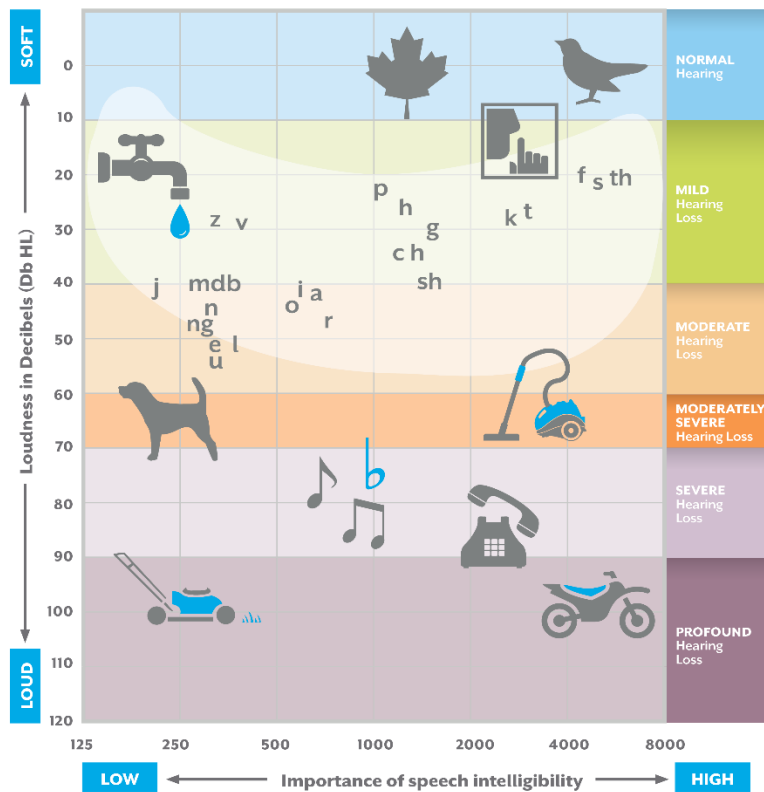
Your ear is an incredible organ that helps you hear and stay balanced. It is divided into three main sections:

- **The Outer Ear:** The part you can see (the pinna) and the ear canal. This acts like a funnel, catching sound waves and directing them toward your eardrum.
- **The Middle Ear:** An air-filled space containing the three smallest bones in your body—the hammer, anvil, and stirrup. These bones amplify the sound vibrations from your eardrum.
- **The Inner Ear:** This contains the cochlea, a snail-shaped organ filled with fluid and thousands of tiny hair cells. These hairs turn vibrations into electrical signals that travel to your brain, allowing you to hear."



#### 4. Understanding the hearing test results.

After your test, your audiologist will sit down with you to explain your results. We use a chart called an **audiogram** to show the quietest sounds you can hear at different pitches. We'll discuss whether your hearing is within the 'normal' range or if there is a level of hearing loss. Most importantly, we will explain how these results match the challenges you've been having, such as hearing in noisy restaurants or following the TV.



Your **audiogram** provides a clear "map" of your hearing. It shows us if there is any hearing loss and identifies the exact level—whether it is mild, moderate, or more significant. Identifying your specific levels allows us to work together to find the right support or technology that fits your lifestyle.

Because everyone hears differently, you might have a combination of these levels across different pitches (for example, hearing low tones well but struggling with high-pitched sounds). Below is a guide to what these categories generally mean:

- **Normal Hearing:** You can hear quiet sounds clearly. However, even with healthy hearing, it's common to struggle in noisy places like restaurants or when you're tired. If you still feel you are having significant trouble, please don't hesitate to discuss this with your Audiologist.
- **Mild Loss:** You likely hear well in quiet rooms but may find it tricky to keep up with conversations in groups or busy, echoing environments.
- **Moderate Loss:** You may find it difficult to follow speech even in quiet settings, and you might frequently need people to repeat themselves or turn the TV volume up.
- **Severe Loss:** Following speech is a major challenge in almost all situations. You will likely rely on hearing aids and lip-reading, and you may find British Sign Language (BSL) to be a helpful tool.
- **Profound Loss:** You may not be able to hear speech sounds at all and will rely on technology like high-powered hearing aids or Cochlear Implants. BSL and lip-reading are often primary ways of communicating.

Your results will also identify the **type** of hearing loss you have. This tells us which part of the ear needs support. The three main types are:

- **Conductive:** This occurs when sound cannot pass easily through the outer or middle ear (the ear canal, eardrum, or tiny ear bones). It is often caused by a blockage or a physical issue.
- **Sensorineural:** This is related to the inner ear, specifically the hearing organ (cochlea) or the hearing nerve. This is the most common type of permanent hearing loss.
- **Mixed:** As the name suggests, this is a combination of both. It means there are factors affecting both the outer/middle ear and the inner ear at the same time

## 5. What happens after my hearing test?

Once we have reviewed your results together, we will discuss the best path forward. If we identify a hearing loss, there are several ways we can support you. Choosing a solution is a personal decision, and we are here to help you at your own pace. Common options include:

- *No further treatment needed or not ready for hearing aids just yet:*

You may not require any further support as it is not required, or you feel like you are managing well in your daily life. That's perfectly okay. If this is the case, we can safely discharge you from our care for now. Should you notice any changes

in the future or simply change your mind, your GP can refer you back to us at any time.

- *Keeping your options open:*

We understand that deciding whether to try hearing aids is a big step, and you might need some time to think it over. There's no rush! If you'd like to discuss your options further once you've had a chance to reflect, simply get in touch with us by phone or email within the next 4 weeks. We can then schedule a follow-up to answer any new questions and help you make the decision that feels right for you. It is important to bear in mind, that the quicker you start using hearing aids, the better it is for you. When we live in a 'quieter' world for too long, our brains can start to lose the habit of processing sound. This is sometimes called '**auditory deprivation**'—it's a bit like a muscle that hasn't been exercised. Research suggests that keeping the hearing nerves active and stimulated is very important for overall health, and staying socially connected through better hearing may even help reduce the risk of dementia later.

- *Ready to try hearing aids:*

If you're open to trying hearing aids. We will talk you through the process of a hearing aid fitting and the types of hearing aids available to you.

## 6. Other associated conditions

Our team is here to support you with other ear-related conditions that can affect your daily life:

- **Tinnitus:** This is the term for hearing sounds like ringing, buzzing, or whistling that don't come from the outside world. It is very common and can happen at any age. While it can be bothersome, there are many effective ways to manage it and reduce its impact.
- **Hyperacusis:** If everyday sounds—like a vacuum cleaner or a busy café—feel painfully loud or distressing, you may have hyperacusis. We can help or provide you with information to support you.
- **Balance & Dizziness:** Your inner ear plays a vital role in keeping you steady. If you've been feeling dizzy or lightheaded, it could be related to your ear health.

If any of these issues are affecting you, please mention them to your Audiologist or GP.

## 7. Communication strategies

- **Stay Close:** Try to keep about a two-arm's length (1–2 metres) between you and the person you're talking to. This makes it much easier to catch every word and see facial expressions clearly Hearing Link Services.
- **Be Open:** If you miss something, just say so! Most people are happy to adjust if they know you're struggling to follow along.

- **Ask for What You Need:** Instead of a general "What?", try being specific. Ask them to speak a little slower or louder, or check a detail you missed—like, "*I caught the plan, but what time did you say we're leaving?*"
- **Coach Your Friends:** Gently let family and friends know how they can help (like facing you when they speak). If they seem frustrated, remember it's usually just because they want to be understood.
- **Pick Your Spot:** Background noise is the biggest hurdle. Try to sit with your back to a wall to "anchor" the sound, and don't be afraid to turn down the TV or music so the conversation can take centre stage.

## 8. Additional Resources available

- Royal National Institute for deaf people - [RNID - National hearing loss charity](#)

## 9. Contact us

If you have any questions, please contact us:

Email: [hearingandbalance@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:hearingandbalance@berkshire.nhs.uk) or [hearingaidrepairs@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:hearingaidrepairs@berkshire.nhs.uk)

Telephone: 0300 365 6222 (please leave a voicemail if there is no answer)

Website: [Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust](#)