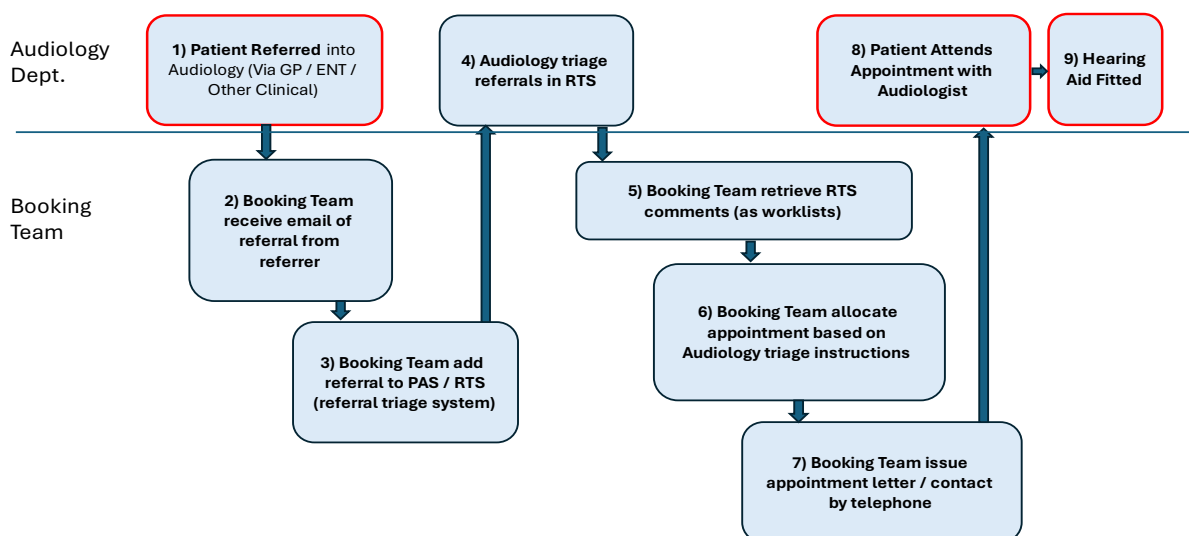


Audiology Improvement Collaborative Case Study

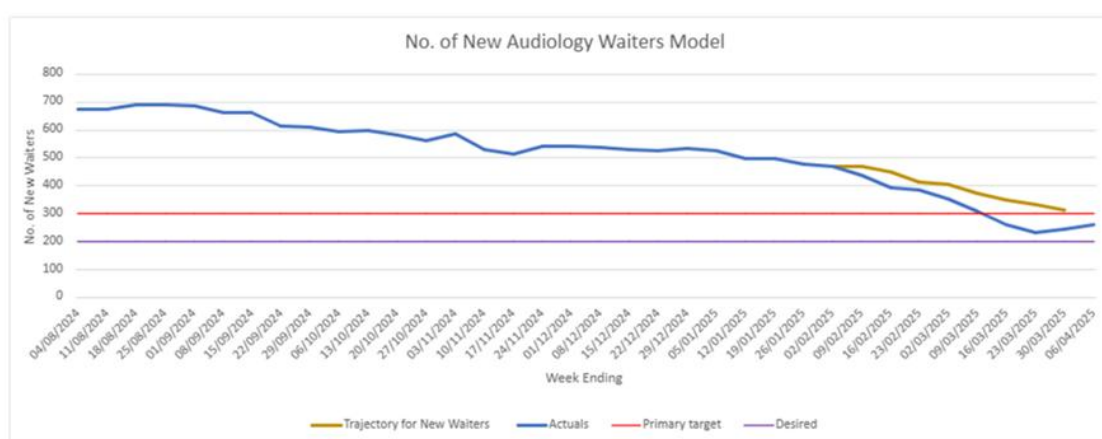
Site Name Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust – Adult Audiology Service
Core Components/Principles Gateshead's Adult Audiology Service has embraced a collaborative quality improvement (QI) approach, with the aim of reducing waiting times for adults referred to audiology. The vision centres on engaging the workforce in co-creating local solutions, supported by training, mentorship, and leadership development. This model encourages reflection away from daily pressures, allowing staff to analyse their processes, share learning, and develop improvements that benefit both the service and patients.
Our Challenge The service faced a complex pathway from referral to hearing aid fitting, with multiple handovers between booking teams and the audiology department. Administrative delays and appointment scheduling issues contributed to long waits. Variability in clinic locations, start and finish times, and environmental factors further reduced efficiency. Patient non-attendance and cancelled clinics also disrupted flow, and the lack of streamlined communication between booking teams and clinicians hindered responsiveness.
What we did (the process) Using a QI framework, the service conducted process mapping and data collection on referrals, follow-ups, triage steps, booking workflows, and clinic utilisation. Workshops brought the multidisciplinary team together to review data, identify value-added and non-value-added activities, and develop PDSA cycles to test changes. Weekly capacity meetings reviewed new referrals, triage outcomes, and trajectory against waiting time goals. Observations of clinic environments and patient feedback informed adjustments to improve comfort and communication. Process redesign addressed the timeliness of triage by clarifying responsibilities of booking and audiology staff, and optimised appointment allocation. Inventory management and environmental improvements were also implemented to support smoother clinic operation. <pre> graph TD subgraph Patient_Referred [Patient Referred] 1[1) Patient Referred into Audiology (Via GP / ENT / Other Clinical)] end subgraph Booking_Team [Booking Team] 2[2) Booking Team add referral to triage system] 4[4) Booking Team - book appointment based on triage instructions] end subgraph Audiology_Dept [Audiology Dept] 3[3) Audiology Triage in referral triage system] 6[6) Patient Attends Audiology appointment] end subgraph Other_Issues [Other Issues?] 5[5) Appointment Issues? Like what? Patient DNA? Cancelled Clinic?] end 1 --> 2 2 --> 3 3 --> 4 4 --> 6 5 --> 6 6 --> 7[7) Fit Hearing Aid] </pre>



What we achieved (the outcomes / data)

The redesigned processes streamlined the pre-appointment activities and improved communication between booking teams and audiology staff, leading to faster appointment allocation. Clinic utilisation improved through better scheduling, and patients experienced more timely access to hearing aid fittings. Weekly monitoring allowed for real-time adjustments to manage demand and capacity.

Trajectory



Patient satisfaction survey results, showed consistently high ratings, with particular praise for clarity of explanations, friendly and reassuring staff, and clean, welcoming clinic environments. Feedback also highlighted the benefit to patients of holding clinics in a relaxed setting with free parking.

Testimonials from wide range of staff groups and patients

Patients shared positive experiences:

“All was explained efficiently and with clarity. All questions fully answered.”

“The environment is lovely. It was quiet being a Sunday. A pleasant experience and impressed with free parking.”

“Excellent service. Audiologist very clear when explaining use of aids. Friendly, welcoming manner.”

“Thank you for my hearing aids. Blaydon Primary Care Centre is always spotlessly clean.”

“Fantastic support and advice. So friendly and reassuring.”

“Audiologist extremely helpful and gave a comprehensive explanation of everything. No problems at all.”

Key System contacts

Alyson Duncan
Service Line Manager Endoscopy, Audiology, and Screening Services
alyson.duncan1@nhs.net

Les Keith
Audiology Lead / Head of Audiology
les.keith@nhs.net

Julian Given
Performance Business Partner
Julian.given1@nhs.net