



Health

Supporting adults to have a hearing test: tips for carers

by Dr Lynzee McShea, Senior Clinical Scientist Audiology

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Preparation is key.

As an Audiologist, I find it very helpful when a carer supports a person to attend an appointment and brings information that can help us complete the assessment. Our appointments are up to an hour per person, so we have limited time to obtain the information we need **and rely on input from those who know the person best.**

Observations from home are helpful (for example, can the person hear better in quiet situations compared to background noise?).

It helps if the carer can think about their own conversations with the person attending the appointment. Do you use gestures to communicate with that person? Do they respond better if they can see your face? Hearing is more complex than it first appears, and can sometimes be difficult to spot without these observations. The people you support may have a significant hearing loss and still respond to lots of everyday sounds.

It also helps us if the person themselves knows what to expect during the assessment. We send information out prior to our appointments that can be helpful. We send photographs of the check-in and waiting area, the Audiology rooms, and staff that the person is likely to meet. We also photograph the different tests we may use. We can arrange a short pre-visit to the department prior to someone's appointment, to reduce anxiety on the day.

We also try to learn more about the individual's likes and dislikes prior to attending. Knowing that a person may become distressed by having their ears touched, means we will delay an ear examination in the appointment. Non-audiological information is also helpful. For example, we were asked to see an individual who was often anxious about attending hospital. We knew that he enjoyed music and a song by Wham in particular! By having this information beforehand, we were able to have the song playing in the room when he first arrived, which immediately helped to make him feel more relaxed and comfortable.

Be proactive and get involved

Another key element is involvement during the appointment.

It is a great help to Audiology if the carer supporting the person to attend actually knows them! This sounds obvious, but often people are supported to attend appointments by carers who know very little about them. If the individual is unable to communicate their needs themselves, this makes it difficult for us to learn about observations at home or any recent medical history.

There have been many occasions where input from a carer has made it possible for us to complete a hearing assessment. We welcome involvement – even something as small as providing encouragement or sitting close to the person, gives them the confidence to participate. We can be very flexible in Audiology and we appreciate input. If the person has a favourite CD or an object that they like, it may be useful to bring these along.

Don't be afraid to get involved and ask questions!

Share information with others

Once a person has been diagnosed with a hearing loss and issued with high quality hearing aids, the responsibility for their use and upkeep falls to the individual or those who support them. **This means it is very important for all those supporting an individual to be consistent and share information.**

When we fit hearing aids, we issue Hearing Support Plans, which carers can use as a tool to take back to their teams and share information. These plans are personalised and tell carers what level of hearing a person has, what this means day to day, and all about their hearing aids and how to look after them.

If you support a person to attend an Audiology appointment, make sure that everyone else is aware of the outcome when you return home. Share information in meetings or arrange training sessions if a person is fitted with hearing aids. Consistency is important as this will help the person to get used to their hearing aids most quickly and effectively.

For example, we fitted hearing aids for a man with Down's syndrome who was supported by several paid caregivers. Some encouraged him to wear the hearing aids every day, others didn't. Staff didn't communicate about the hearing aids and no information was written down, so sometimes the hearing aid batteries were left for weeks before they were changed. I went to visit this man at home and did a training session for his carers and now he is supported well with his hearing aids, regardless of who is supporting him that day.

Although hearing assessment is important, aftercare is just as important!