

An Evaluation of the Benefit to Patients of an Outreach Service with User Group

Annie Woolley

Yorkshire Auditory Implant Service

Introduction

Yorkshire Auditory Implant Service (YAIS) cares for patients from a wide geographical area. The department offers routine audiological appointments for adults at two outreach services in Hull and Barnsley, in addition to the Listening for Life Centre in Bradford. A user group, with access to technical support, runs concurrently four times a year. This investigation aimed to evaluate the patient benefit of both these outreach services.



Methods and Participants

A questionnaire was developed and sent by post to all patients on the waiting list for either of the outreach services (sixty patients in both Hull and Barnsley). Copies of the questionnaire were also made available at a user group in both locations. A total of sixty nine questionnaires (58%) were returned. Six were not included in the analysis as the patients reported that they had not yet attended the outreach service and were therefore unable to comment. Respondents ranged in age from sixteen to ninety, with a mean age of sixty one. 62% of respondents were women and one did not disclose their gender.

Results and Patient Experiences

- One in five respondents reported that they would be unable to attend Audiology appointments in Bradford if an appointment was unavailable at their local outreach service. The average age of these patients was lower than the group average, suggesting that other factors affect patients' willingness or ability to travel.
- The data indicates a saving of three quarters of an hour per patient per journey when attending the outreach services rather than the Listening for Life Centre. 82% of respondents also made a saving in travel costs, typically around £10 for those attending Barnsley and £20 for those attending Hull.
- In order to maximise capacity at the outreach clinics, routine annual review appointments are booked for thirty minutes, rather than an hour as at the Listening for Life Centre. Despite this, 98% of respondents felt that there was enough time for their appointment.

Time is the best thing. Easy commute too. I go on the bus to Barnsley. Whereas Bradford, I have to drive or get some else to drive me.

- 54% of respondents had attended a user group in the last year. The questionnaire asked why patients made the decision to attend or not.

I attend groups to talk to implant users and gain experience from them too. Work permitting, I attend them all. I like to pass on my own experiences and check on any new gadgets.

I do not attend because it is in working hours.

I attend to get my implant checked.
- Patients were asked if they would recommend groups to other cochlear implant users. All those who provided an answer would recommend it.

Definitely. It's a must before and after the operation.

Yes. You can swap experiences, coping strategies and companionship.

My husband has contact with other partners and and realises that we are not alone in the difficulties we have.
- Several patients felt that it was helpful for their communication partners to attend the groups.
- Overall patient satisfaction with the service provided was high. 98% of respondents reported that their overall experience at the outreach clinic was better than or no different to their experience at the Listening for Life Centre and 93% would choose to attend the outreach service for a future appointment.
- Suggestions for improvements to the service included increasing its frequency and changes to the location.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Provision of an outreach service enables patients to access audiological care and peer support closer to home, which creates greater patient satisfaction. YAIS will therefore continue to provide these services in Hull and Barnsley.

A small scoping exercise was completed and identified a similar demand for services in the North Yorkshire. YAIS is currently working to identify a venue in York to offer these patients the same choice and benefits.

