

## Tinnitus Services and COVID-19

This document has been co-authored by the British Tinnitus Association (BTA) and British Academy of Audiology (BAA) as guidance regarding how to offer a tinnitus service and information for patients on what to expect from a tinnitus appointment, which is likely to be carried out using remote care during the Covid-19 Pandemic response across our health services.

### Guidance on offering a tinnitus service

Tinnitus has not been identified by the BAA as either an essential nor urgent activity ([BAA Covid19](#)), however under 'Alternative ways of working,' the same document states; "*Many face-to-face appointments can be replaced with telephone/skype consultations – e.g. tinnitus,*" Therefore a tinnitus service is still possible, and providing a remote service and signposting the online resources available will help alleviate anxiety related to tinnitus for many, particularly at this difficult time.

It is recommended, where possible, that appointments should be held using video conferencing facilities if available to both the patient and the clinician.

**Video consultation** is more suited to counselling and support sessions in this patient group for two reasons:

- 1) There are often enhanced communication options available, in a population likely to have hearing difficulties, such as the possibility of lip reading and live captioning
- 2) The ability to see some non verbal cues during counselling interventions.

If you have never had access to virtual systems it is vital to find out which of the options are open to you for using virtual communication systems with patients, taking advice from your Information Technology teams. Simple commercial systems for example Skype or Zoom may not be deemed secure and your employer may have a recommended system.

**Telephone consultation** should be a secondary option and only used if video conferencing is deemed inappropriate by the clinician, the employer or the patient.

It is recommended these appointments focus on;

- Assessing and supporting a patients understanding of tinnitus
- Discussing ways to manage tinnitus whilst social distancing (see additional resources for assistance)
- Assessing and support managing stress, anxiety and depression
- Signposting to appropriate resources and support
- Discussion around sound therapy and hearing instruments, whilst acknowledging assessment for hearing instruments is not currently possible, if you are able to add patients to a list for this when services resume you should explain this to the patient.

Record keeping is particularly important during this period and with all virtual appointments to explain the steps you have needed to take that are not inline with your normal appointment process and best practice techniques.

If possible, post out to the patient a record of the management plan you have agreed on the virtual appointment, along with any additional resources you have agreed as appropriate.

## General Resources

- [NICE Tinnitus Guidance](#)
- **Resources from the British Tinnitus Association;**
  - [Website](#)
  - Web chat (available via the website)
  - [Take on Tinnitus](#)
  - Helpline – 0800 018 0527
- **Resources from Action on Hearing Loss**
  - [Action on Hearing Loss](#)
  - Tinnitus information line 0808 808 6666
  - Email [tinnitushelpline@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:tinnitushelpline@hearingloss.org.uk)
  - Textphone 0808 808 9000

## Specific resources for telephone/skype consultations, managing tinnitus whilst socially distancing

- BTA are running online support groups, for more information [colette@tinnitus.org.uk](mailto:colette@tinnitus.org.uk); or invite people to [sign up here](#)
- [BTA information on Social distancing and managing tinnitus](#)
- Tinnitus Apps can be very helpful and BTA have compiled a list of different types of [apps](#)

You may find it helpful to direct people to the BTA online shop to purchase additional equipment to help manage their tinnitus, such as sleep phones or pillow speakers: [BTA Shop](#)

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