



NHS Lothian Media Release - Paediatric Audiology

Strict Embargo: 1300 Thursday 9 December

An extensive expert review has found failings in the standard of hearing tests carried out for children in NHS Lothian's Paediatric Audiology service.

The review, conducted independently by the British Academy of Audiology (BAA), identifies significant concerns about hearing tests that were not carried out to the required professional standard, with consequences for children and their families. In some cases, diagnosis of hearing loss or impairment may have been missed or delayed.

Early identification of hearing loss or impairment from birth is important because the earlier it is picked up, the more successfully it can be treated with hearing aids or cochlear implants and the better the outcomes for the child.

Tracey Gillies, Medical Director NHS Lothian said; "We are very sorry and saddened to learn that there are some children whose conditions were not diagnosed correctly, or as early as possible, as a result of testing that was not up to standard.

"Due to these failings, the diagnosis of hearing loss or impairment in six children was missed. Diagnosis of a further six children was significantly delayed with long term consequences for these children. Their long-term development of speech and language will be affected and these children will require specialist support."

Ms Gillies continued "Delayed diagnosis of hearing loss in a further 48 children is also likely to have resulted in some harm, though the longer-term impact of this will depend on the individual circumstances of each child. Some children may require to be retested.

"We have already written to the most severely-affected families individually to offer support and a face-to-face meeting to discuss their child's condition. We have also arranged appointments for those children whom the review recommends should be tested again.

"In addition, measures have been put in place to identify young children currently in the system whose cases may require clinical review. If any concerns are found, the families will be contacted immediately.

“We apologise sincerely to all affected children and their families for these failings and for the worry and distress caused. We would encourage families who may have concerns to contact our helpline for information on 0131 465 5457. Lines will be open on Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm.

“We have been engaging closely with the National Deaf Children’s Society and would like to thank them for the support they are able to provide families via their own helpline, which can be contacted on 0808 800 8880.”

NHS Lothian commissioned the full, external review of the service following criticism in May about the diagnosis and care of a child with hearing difficulties. The review is part of the Health Board’s response to the recommendations made by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman who investigated that case.

Other actions already taken include the appointment of an additional senior expert to provide support in Paediatric Audiology, a comprehensive training programme for service staff and support from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde with testing in the interim.

The review consisted of an audit of cases from 2009 -2018, an appraisal of the clinical governance structures in place as well as a week’s residential visit by external experts to observe working practices in the service.

NHS Lothian Chief Executive, Calum Campbell said “The thoroughness of the review reflects our determination to improve the service and outcomes for the children in our care. We note that the report was positive about some aspects of the care of the audiology team who are committed to working hard to improve the quality of testing provided by the service. A number of improvements have already been made and a detailed action plan has been developed to implement all the recommendations of the BAA in full.

“We continue to work closely with the BAA and would like to thank them for their diligence and support in conducting the review.

“I apologise to the affected families and give them my assurance that lessons have been learned and that the recommendations from the review are being implemented in full”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

British Academy of Audiology Review into NHS Lothian Paediatric Audiology ([LINK](#))
NHS Lothian Paediatric Audiology Governance Review ([LINK](#))

NHS Lothian Helpline: 0131 465 5457
Mondays to Fridays 9.00am to 4.00pm.

National Deaf Children's Society Helpline: 0800 800 8880
Mondays to Fridays 9.00am – 5.00pm

For information and services provided by the British Deaf Children Society, please visit their website <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/our-services/>

For Further Information Please Contact:
Judith Mackay , Director of Communications: 07770 396958