

Staff Hearing Impairment Group

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Paediatric Audiology (Havering, Barking and Dagenham)

1. Introduction

- Whist training staff members about the audiology service, it became apparent that a number of staff had hearing loss themselves. I felt these staff may benefit from further support from the Trust. I therefore initiated a service improvement project to develop a Trust Hearing Impairment Staff Network.

2. Methods

- The project involved collaborative working across departments, including Human Resources, Equality and Diversity, IT and Audiology.
- The aim was to establish a pathway for staff with hearing loss to readily access support and advice.
- Having identified that there was a population at the Trust with hearing loss, we advertised a meet up group for peer support, which then evolved into a platform for a focus group on how to improve the workplace for those with hearing loss and a bi-monthly meet up group.



Challenges

- Spreading the word across the large number of employees and managers at the Trust.
- Meeting varied needs of those with hearing loss
- Booking appropriate speakers at the group
- As a paediatric site, extra funding was agreed from E&D budget for assessment. This can also be covered by paying via bank staffing

4. Discussion

- NELFT take pride in being a leading disability confident employer. The feedback from staff with hearing loss has highlighted how they felt listened to, supported and valued.
- Paediatric Audiologists enjoyed the varied work of seeing adult staff members and networking across the Trust.
- Our Hearing Impairment Staff Network has been a great success and we would love to inspire other Trusts across the country to develop something similar to better support those with hearing loss working for the NHS.

Trust Intranet Page

Hearing Support Group



The group offers support for members of staff with a hearing impairment and those who think they may have a hearing impairment. The group helps raise the profile of staff, providing advice and guidance in a confidential and safe environment. The group meets on a two-monthly basis and is open to all staff who want to get involved in any way. Here are some of their thoughts and worries that they have shared:

"I was scared to tell my manager about my hearing impairment for fear I may lose my job."

"I booked a hearing test and went in my lunch break, I was put off the cost of a hearing aid."

"I have told people I work with I have a hearing loss in my NELFT Office but I still have to remind people I work with to look at me when they talk so I can lip read."

"Sometimes in work I pretend I heard what was said and hope I will catch up on the conversation."

"I was worried people might think I was ignoring them."

"I found this group and feel so much more informed about my hearing and how equipment can help me at work, I even got offered a hearing test."

"Thanks to the NELFT HI group I have now got a device to help me in meetings and now have let IT know not to call me on the phone but use email instead."

The Group is chaired by Natalie Higgins, STAR Worker

The Executive Champion for Disability is Simon Hart, Executive Director of People & Culture

The Group is supported by:

- Colin Igbokwe, ICT Infrastructure Lead & Disability Ambassador
- Kirsty Fitz-Poole, Audiologist

If you would like to become a member of this group and for more information on how NELFT can help you at work with equipment and support from other staff please get in touch with ED&I Team and come along to our group!

For further information, advice and how to join the group email: DisabilityNetwork@nelft.nhs.uk.

Kirsty Fitz-Poole offers help and advice to NELFT staff. To get in touch, contact Kirsty on Audiology@nelft.nhs.uk.

Hearing Support Group meetings in 2022 (open to all staff)

- We meet on a bi-monthly basis on the second Thursday, every two months, 11am - 12:30pm. Join here.



3. Results

- Early interventions that lead on from the focus group included:
 - Subtitles added to the Trust induction training videos
 - Developing a robust pathway for BSL interpreters to be booked for training
 - Deaf awareness training rolled out for managers
 - Phone free access to IT support
 - Advertising the peer support network
- The group evolved and we set up regular support group, with an agenda of guest speakers with topics like tinnitus, listening equipment, troubleshooting hearing aids and British Sign Language classes.
- Key attendance: Staff with hearing loss, Equality & Diversity, IT and Audiology
- Over the past 5 years that we have been developing this Network, we have helped support over 70 staff members
- Leading on from this, we have made a huge step forward developing a pathway for staff with hearing difficulties to get support in house.
 - Self Referral or via Equality & Diversity
 - Report (see example template) shared with GP to facilitate a referral for local audiology support.

