



Our ref: WQ87157

Heledd Fychan MS
Senedd Regional Member for South Wales Central

Heledd.Fychan@senedd.wales

8 February 2023

Dear Heledd

Thank you for your recent written question asking me what plans I have to improve waiting times for adults waiting for NHS hearing loss services in Wales, given they have increased by 142 percent since August 2021, despite a number of health boards moving their services from hospital to GPs.

As with many services we have seen increases in demand since Covid 19 restrictions were lifted and more people have felt safe to engage with the NHS. Performance against the 14-week target varies across each health board as they redesign their services, but the November statistics show that total waits for Audiology first hearing aids was **7,576** this is **80%** higher than the August 2021 position of **4,186**.

The current position of Wales audiology service provision is very strong and has evolved considerably in recent years since the publication of the Framework of Action for D/deaf and those people living with hearing loss or hearing impairment.

We continue to transform services and integrate audiology within the 60 local Primary Care Clusters across Wales. NHS Wales audiology service provides more integrated pathways and delivery consistent with NHS Wales policy of joined up collaborative care and aligns with all Welsh Government's strategic plans.

NHS Wales pathways, with national clinical standards for the delivery of hearing care services, are being implemented across all health boards, with advanced progress made by Swansea Bay University Health Board. The leading health boards are sharing good practices and working with the other health boards to support implementation across Wales.

Once the pathways are in place, patients will be referred to a primary care audiology service, freeing up appointments in secondary care and GPs, where hearing care will be provided free of charge, by Advanced Audiology Practitioners.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Wales audiology services are well-regarded by the wider UK Governments and audiology health professionals. In particular, the quality standards and associated audits are considered robust and vital to ensure high quality of standards of care, value for money, and continuity of patient care in NHS Wales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services