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| **Primary Care** **Directorate**  NHS Community Hearing Service  E: nhscommunityhearingservice@gov.scot |  |
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**14 February 2022**

**To PC Leads**

**EAR WAX REMOVAL TREATMENT**

During the pandemic access to treatment for ear wax removal has become increasingly complex for patients, due to:

* A delay in the transfer of this treatment from the patient’s GP to the new community NHS service, CTAC (Community Treatment And Care Services), under the 2018 General Medical Services contract.
* Updated guidance on the ear wax removal pathway was provided by NICE in March 2021 relating to changes to how ear wax removal treatments are administered (the practice of manual removal of ear wax using syringing should be discontinued. Alternative recommended treatments for ear wax removal are ear drops, irrigation and suction).

*Impact on the patient/general public*

These changes appear to have caused significant confusion and frustration for patients, with the worst case scenario often involving elderly patients with limited income having to pay repeatedly for treatments from private providers that should be available to them free at the point of use on the NHS. You will of course be aware that persistent problems with ear wax can negatively impact many aspects of a patient’s life including their mental health and ability to communicate and socially interact. This past year has highlighted to all of us the importance of communication and the need for strong connections. Work towards reducing or removing the stigma of hearing loss has never been more essential.

*Effects On Government And Health Boards*

For the Scottish Government and perhaps for many Health Boards, this situation has manifested in a substantial number of correspondence that explains, but often doesn’t resolve the situation from a patients’ perspective. The lack of a consistent ear wax removal service available on the NHS has also been the topic of Parliamentary questions.

*Delivery Of Audiology Treatment*

Effective delivery of audiology treatment is often impeded by occlusion of the ear caused by the presence of ear wax. In light of the above, and ahead of the introduction of a community hearing service, which is intended to help reduce the workload for general practitioners and positively impact wait lists for acute services, it would be helpful if you could complete the following short survey.

We understand that all Health Boards will be dealing with many complex issues relating to the pandemic, however, your feedback is essential in helping to inform us about plans for ear wax removal treatment in your area. Findings from your responses will be shared across all Boards and will allow for informed planning in the delivery of audiology treatment. Completed surveys should be returned no later than **Monday 28 February 2022** to [nhscommunityhearingservice@gov.scot](mailto:nhscommunityhearingservice@gov.scot).

Thank you for your time.

**NHS COMMUNITY HEARING SERVICE**

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT**

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – Primary Care: Ear Wax Removal Survey**

**Health Board\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Return to:** [**nhscommunityhearingservice@gov.scot**](mailto:nhscommunityhearingservice@gov.scot) **by Monday 28 February 2022 THANK YOU**

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|  | **CURRENT SERVICE** |  |  |
| **1** | We are presently providing an ear wax removal service, through (*Please tick one of the following*): | **YES** | **NO** |
|  | * GP only |  |  |
|  | * CTAC only |  |  |
|  | * Combination of GP & CTAC services |  |  |
|  | * Other (please advise) |  |  |
| **2** | *Please indicate which situation best explains the geographic reach of service:* |  |  |
|  | * the current service offered covers the whole Health Board area *or* |  |  |
|  | * there are geographic areas where no service is available |  |  |
| **3** | If you answered *yes* to the last question, please use this space to list areas where no service is provided |  |  |
|  | **FUTURE SERVICE** |  |  |
| **4** | How will the local ear wax removal service operate from 1 April 2022? (*Please tick one of the following*): | **YES** | **NO** |
|  | * Our CTAC service will be operational from 1 April and ear wax removal is being offered |  |  |
|  | * Our CTAC service will be operational from 1 April and ear wax removal is only being offered in a limited number of geographic areas |  |  |
|  | * Our CTAC service will be operational from 1 April and ear wax removal is not being offered |  |  |
| **5** | If you said *yes* to the last question and ear wax removal is not being offered from 1 April 2022, when do you estimate your ear wax removal service will become available ? | ***some areas*** | ***all areas*** |
| **6** | When do you plan to introduce pre-appointments with CTAC for patients ahead of an audiology visit? | ***Month/year*** |  |
|  | **COMMUNICATIONS & PATHWAYS *(Patients)*** | ***Has already taken place (please tick)*** | ***Is scheduled for***  ***(pls advise date)*** |
| **7** | Written/on-line communications to patients regarding changes to accessing ear wax removal treatments |  |  |
| **8** | Written/on-line communications to patients regarding accessing CTAC services |  |  |
| **9** | Written/on-line communications to patients advising that they may still enquire via their GP whether this treatment is available from their GP or from the CTAC service |  |  |
| **10** | Written/on-line communications to patients advising that their GP can still refer them on to ENT or Audiology services where appropriate |  |  |
| **11** | The Health Board has ensured that patients with hearing difficulties can easily access information on the various pathways by which they can locally access | **an audiologist**  ***(pls tick)*** | **an ENT specialist**  ***(pls tick)*** |
|  | **COMMUNICATIONS & PATHWAYS *(Clinical Staff)*** | ***Has already taken place (please tick)*** | ***Is scheduled for***  ***(pls advise date)*** |
| **12** | Written/on-line communications to all relevant healthcare staff, including audiologists, regarding changes to treatment |  |  |
| **13** | Written/on-line communications to GPs regarding the risks of referring patients to private providers in relation to GMC guidance and competition law. |  |  |
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