NICE guideline on assessment and management of adult hearing loss

What is a NICE guideline?
The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent public body that provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care in England. NICE does this by providing evidence-based recommendations on a broad range of topics e.g., preventing and managing specific conditions. The Department of Health, in England, has asked NICE to produce a guideline on the assessment and management of hearing loss in adults. Decisions on how the guidelines apply to other UK countries are made by the Welsh Government, Scottish Government, and the Northern Ireland Executive.

The guideline is aimed at commissioners of health and care services, healthcare professionals, and people who use the services. It will make recommendations on the care and services that are suitable for people with adult onset hearing loss. In addition to the specific recommendations, the guideline will provide a summary of the evidence, and how this was used, to generate the recommendations.

What topics will be covered in the adult hearing loss guideline?
The key areas that will be covered include:

- Initial assessment/presentation e.g., What signs and symptoms require urgent referral to a specialist?
- Further assessment e.g., How should hearing and communication needs be assessed?
- Management e.g., What is the clinical and cost effectiveness of unilateral compared to bilateral hearing aid prescription and fitting?

The link provided towards the end of this article will take you to all the relevant documents including the full scope.

Who is responsible for managing and developing the guideline?
The National Guideline Centre (NGC) is commissioned and funded by NICE to produce guidance. The NGC is hosted by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), but is a partnership between a number of Royal Colleges (physicians, nurses, GPs, and surgeons). The role of the NGC is to manage the development of the guideline by providing technical expertise and support to the guideline committee. The technical team of health service researchers include the guideline lead, project manager, editorial assistants, information scientists, research fellows and health economists. So far, NGC has produced more than 30 guidelines and all NICE guidance can be viewed at: www.nice.org.uk/guidance

The guideline is developed by an independent and unbiased advisory board of experts, who are known as the Guideline Committee (GC). A topic-specific GC was formed for the adult hearing loss guidance, including service users, and the members are listed at the end of this article.

Around 200 stakeholders, including the British Society of Audiology, have registered their interest in the guideline topic with NICE. Registered stakeholders comment on the draft scope and draft guideline.

What are the main stages in the development of a guideline?
The time taken from the start of the scoping exercise to the guideline publication varies from 12 to 27 months. The development of the adult hearing loss guideline started in September 2015 when NHS England referred the guideline topic to NICE. The scope of the
The draft guidelines will be available for consultation in November 2017 and the expected date of publication is May 2018.

guideline (i.e., an overview of what the guideline should include and the key clinical issues) was developed during spring 2016 and the final version was published in July 2016. The key clinical issues listed in the scope were then translated into around 15-20 clear, focused and well-formulated questions (following the PICOS framework: Population of interest, Intervention, Comparator, Outcome and Study design). Systematic identification, review and assessment of the quality of the evidence commenced in July 2016. In addition to clinical effectiveness, health economists assess cost effectiveness. The writing of the guideline is an iterative process that is on-going and the GC has been meeting approximately every 6 weeks since June 2016. The draft guidelines will be available for consultation in November 2017 and the expected publication date is May 2018.

Information and documents about the adult hearing loss guideline can be obtained at: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-cg-wave0833/documents/html-content

Any queries about the adult hearing loss guidelines should be emailed to hearingloss@nice.org.uk

Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX

Membership of Hearing Loss Guideline Committee

Chair

Katherine Harrop-Griffiths, Consultant Audiovestibular Physician

Full members

• Graham Easton, GP
• Melanie Ferguson, Consultant Clinical Scientist
• Julia Garlick, Lay Member
• Richard Irving, ENT Surgeon
• Ted Leverton, GP (retired)
• Kevin J Munro, Professor of Audiology (Early GC member)
• Rudrapathy Palaniappan, Audiovestibular Physician
• Linda Parton, Lay Member
• Neil Pendleton, Professor of Medical Gerontology
• Jane Wild, Consultant Clinical Scientist

Topic expert members

• Michael Akeroyd, Director, MRC Institute of Hearing Research
• Chris Armitage, Professor of Health Psychology
• Steve Connor, Consultant Neuroradiologist
• Helen Gallacher, Staff Nurse
• Caroline Carr, Social Worker

Figure 1. The guideline development process