

Experiences of Hearing Aid services through service transition and Covid-19

Contents

Background of the Report	3
Who we spoke to	4
Who is your current provider of hearing aid services?	6
CamTAD Hearing Support	7
Location of UHDB services	8
How have you found your care with UHDB?	9
What worked well? (UHDB)	11
What could be improved? (UHDB)	12
Sentiments of experiences with CamTAD	13
Location of Specsavers services	15
How have you found your care with Specsavers?	16
What worked well? (Specsavers)	17
What could be improved? (Specsavers)	18
Scrivens services	19
After a transition of services, has your service changed?	20
Have you transferred to a community service?	21
How did you find the transition?	22
Do you have any comments about the transition?	23
Do you have any other comments?	24
Summary of experiences	26
Responses from CamTAD and UHDB	27

Appendices of each individual anonymous response to the survey is available on request
- contact details for Healthwatch Derby are at the end of the report.

Background of the report

Around 18 months ago CamTAD Hearing Support met with Healthwatch Derby and raised some concerns about the (then) recent transition for some hearing aid patients from the local hospital to community services. They informed Healthwatch that they had been contacted by some patients due to being confused by the communication about the transition and some were unsure about why and how they would move services.

Healthwatch Derby wanted to look into this issue in more detail to gain people's experience and pass on any learning. Healthwatch had also not looked into hearing aid services before, and so alongside CamTAD Hearing Support designed a project that included both experiences of hearing aid services and the transition of the services. This project was due to be launched around April 2020. Due to the pandemic and changes to services this project was put on hold.

CamTAD Hearing Support and Healthwatch reviewed this project over the past year and launched the new refreshed project in 2021 - this project includes people's experiences of hearing aid services during the pandemic and people's experiences of the transitions of services since 2018.

About the project and how we spoke to people:

Healthwatch Derby designed an updated survey with CamTAD Hearing Support and we launched the project together. There were 3 ways people could access the survey.

- 1: An on-line survey
- 2: A telephone number upon which a volunteer would support the person to fill out the survey
- 3: A postal survey sent out to all of CamTAD's Hearing Aids support membership.

The project was open from 24/05/21 to 25/06/21.

Overall 227 responses were given to the survey.

About current hearing aid services

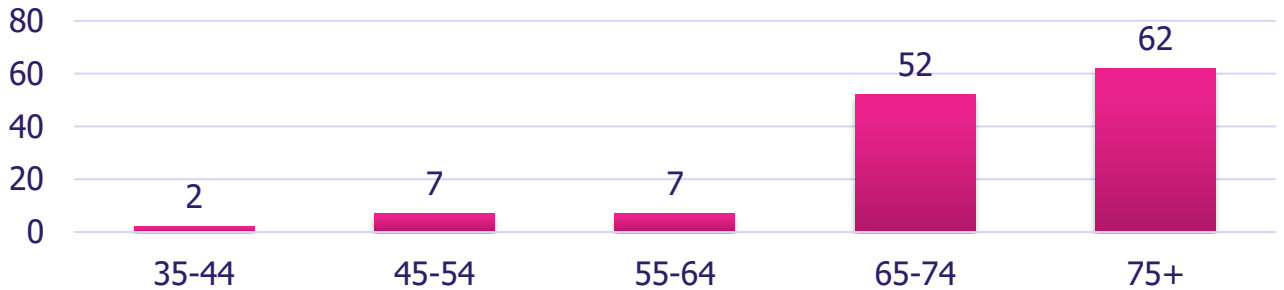
The Acute Audiology services in Derby/Derbyshire are run by the University Hospitals of Derby and Burton (UHDB) from various locations across the county. They provide a range of audiological tests including diagnostic hearing assessments and hearing therapy.

Community Based audiology services are run by a variety of providers within the community, such as Specsavers and Scrivens who provide services such as hearing assessments and hearing aid support.

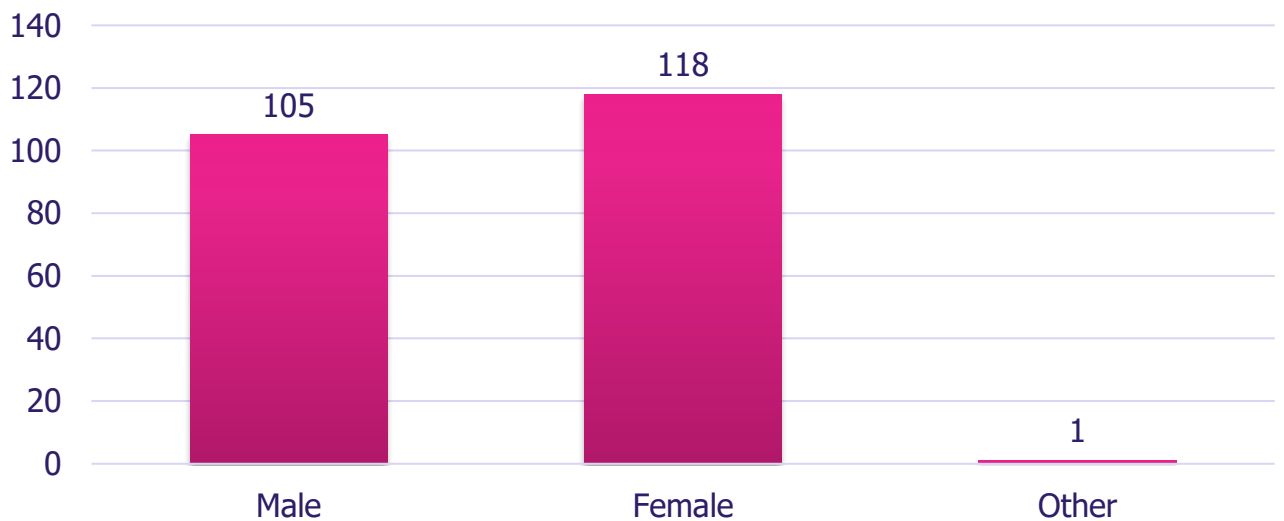
Who we spoke to:

Healthwatch Derby's survey was open from 24th May until 25th of June 2021 and 227 people completed the survey. Below is the monitoring information that was given.

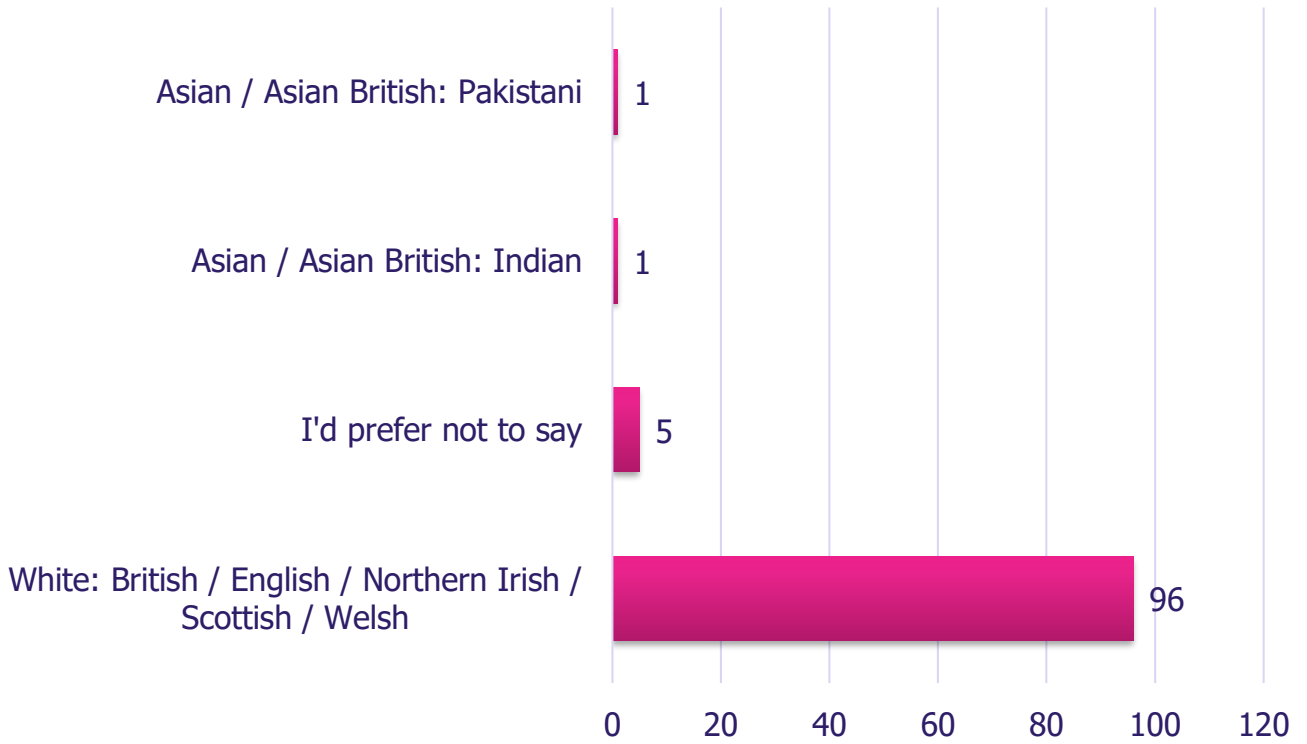
Age



Identified gender

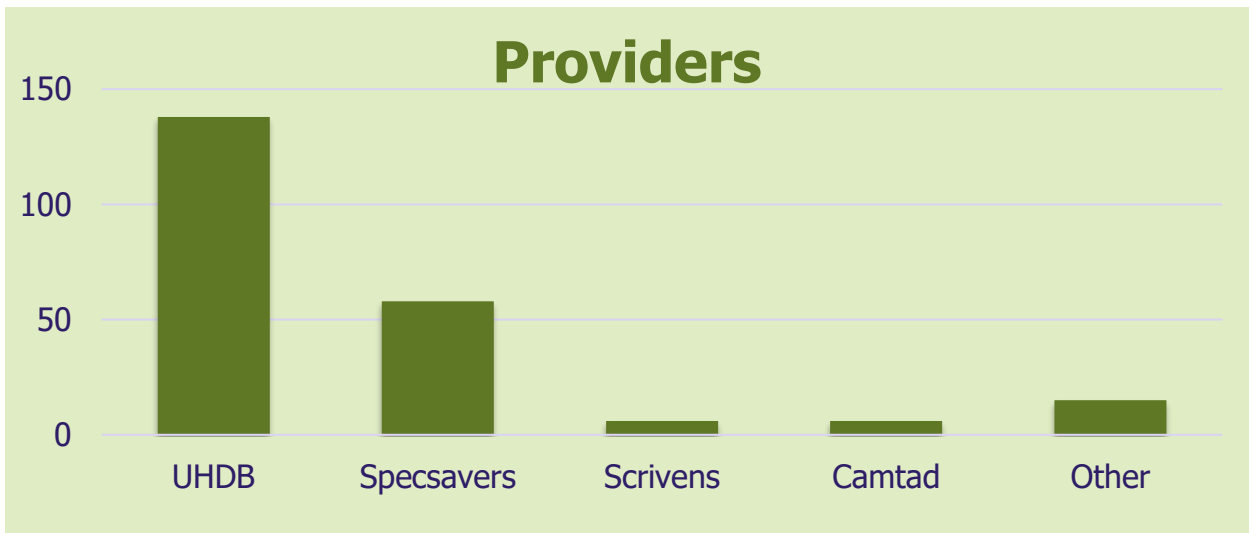


Ethnic background



Who is your current provider of hearing aid services?

The first section of this report looks at people's experience of hearing aid services through the pandemic. The section asks about people's experiences around what worked well and if anything could have been improved. Each provider has been looked at separately.



61% of those surveyed were provided their hearing aid service by UHDB, followed by 26% by Specsavers.

Other notable providers mentioned were Scrivens and Camtad who each were named as providing for 6 people. Several respondents provided comments regarding more than service.

Other providers listed were Midland Street Surgery (Long Eaton), St Oswalds (Ashbourne), Ilkeston Community Hospital, Castle Donington Surgery, Heartwood Surgery (Swadlincote), Intu Centre Derby, 'Swadlincote/Head and Neck/Kings Med' and several responses stated N/A.

CamTAD Hearing Support



CamTAD Hearing Support is an independent charity, based in Derby at the London Road Community Hospital.

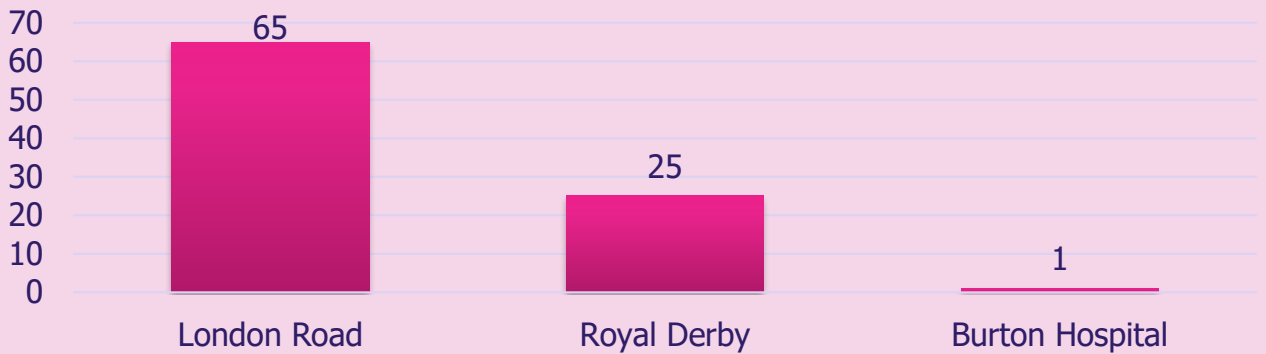
CamTAD stands for Campaign for Tackling Acquired Deafness and was set up in 1985 by a group of volunteers who felt that there was a need for support locally. Their purpose is to ensure that hearing impaired people (hard of hearing / sensory loss) have the highest quality of life by making them aware of the services, equipment and strategies that are available to them.

Although CamTAD are not a hearing aid provider, it appeared that patients attending London Road Community Hospital were confused as to whether CamTAD, UHDB or both were involved in their care and considered to be their main care provider. Some patients stated CamTAD to be their service provider whereas others stated UHDB London Road Community Hospital but only made responses and comments regarding CamTAD.

Just under a third of respondents who listed UHDB as their provider made reference to CamTAD in their comments and it is for this reason that the responses to the questions "What worked well?" and "Is there anything that could be improved?" may be inclusive of UHDB and CamTAD as it was not always possible to accurately split the sentiment.

Sentiments that specifically mention CamTAD have been discussed separately in this report on pages 12 and 13.

Location of UHDB Services



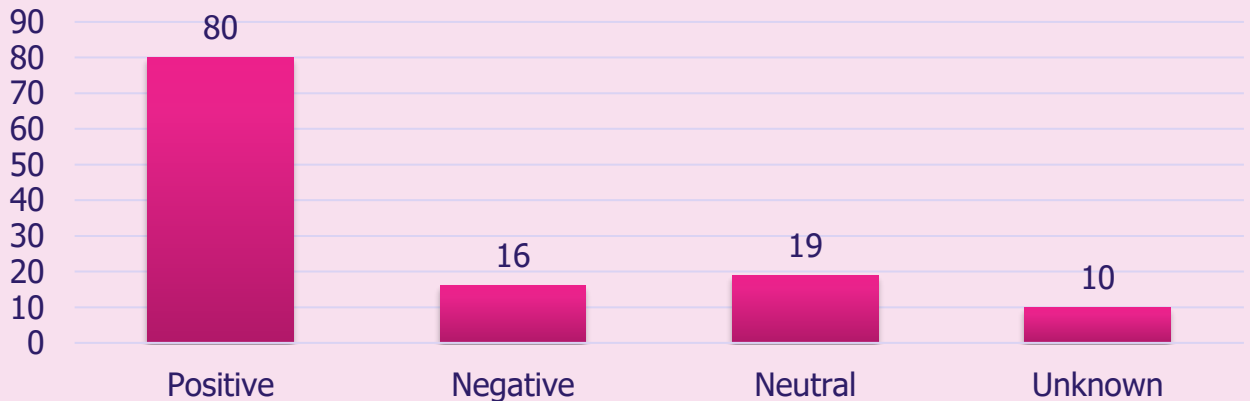
138 people answered the survey and said that their hearing aid service was provided by UHDB and the specific locations are shown in the chart above.

47 respondents did not specify which UHDB location their service was from.

How have you found your care with UHDB?

People were asked how they felt about the general care they had received and below are the sentiments of experiences given.

Sentiments of experiences



Key messages of positives aspects of experiences:

41% of positive experiences were describing the overall service as excellent, exceptional, very good, great or more than satisfied and a further 33% of positive experiences described it as good, fine, no problems and better than expected.

Other key positive points mentioned were:

- Staff were helpful, caring, thorough and efficient
- Communication was good, and explained clearly
- Service users felt safe



“The department was run efficiently and everything was explained to me.”

“Polite, punctual, excellent service.”

“I have found it be excellent given the difficult circumstances. Clear communications.”

“Any problems were listened to and action taken.”



How have you found your care with UHDB?

Key messages of negatives aspects of experiences:

29% of comments related to a lack of contact or communication by providers

29% of comments stated that their hospital appointment had been postponed or that they were unable to get an appointment

29% of comments were related to the lack of availability of replacement parts or servicing to their hearing aids

Individual comments were made that one person was disappointed that their hearing test was delayed due to the wax removal service being stopped but that after having this privately they were able to continue as usual and another that no treatment had been received but it was unclear as to the reasons why or what barriers this person faced.



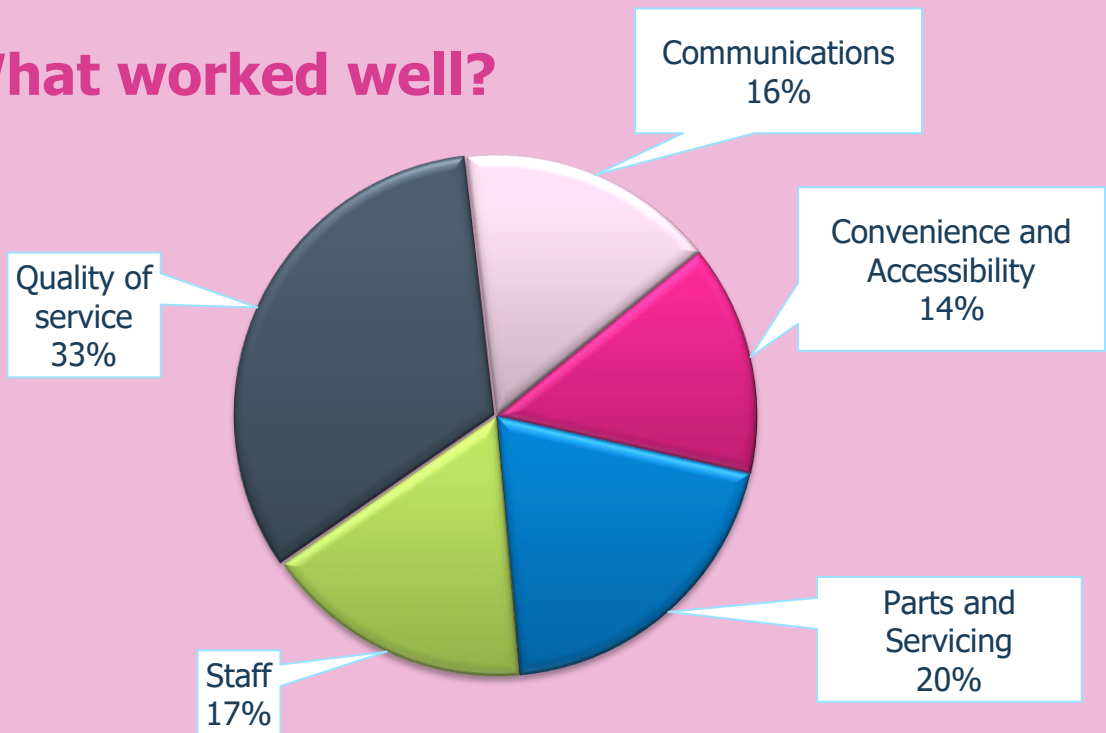
"No communication what so ever."

"Very little care or communication during the pandemic."

"Not be able to get an appointment."



What worked well?



The majority of comments about what worked well (33%) were about the overall quality of service, and the key point raised by 37% of these respondents was around the promptness and responsiveness of the service. Individual comments mentioned that they felt supported and looked after and that the service was thorough, informative, and well organised.

Other key themes mentioned:

Parts and Servicing:

- Ease and availability of servicing or receiving new hearing aids, tubing and batteries

Staff:

- Friendly, helpful, patient, approachable, professional and knowledgeable

Communications:

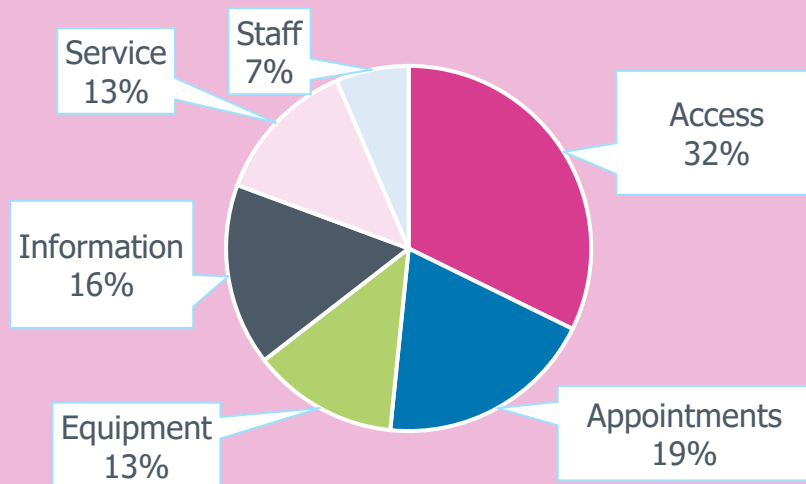
- Ability to easily contact Audiology by telephone and email and receive a quick, clear response

Convenience and Accessibility:

- Appointments available at convenient times
- Covid measures in place

Is there anything that could be improved?

78% of respondents stated that no, nothing could be improved for them or did not enter an answer with any suggested improvements.



There were mixed sentiments from the respondents who did feel that improvements could be made.

The key messages were:

Access:

- More local service without needing to travel into town
- More availability of opening hours when Covid restrictions drop
- Disabled parking at London Road Community Hospital
- Potential of a service to care homes
- More contact options other than email

Appointments:

- More contact between appointments and periodic checks
- More notice time for appointments, and quicker follow up checks

Information:

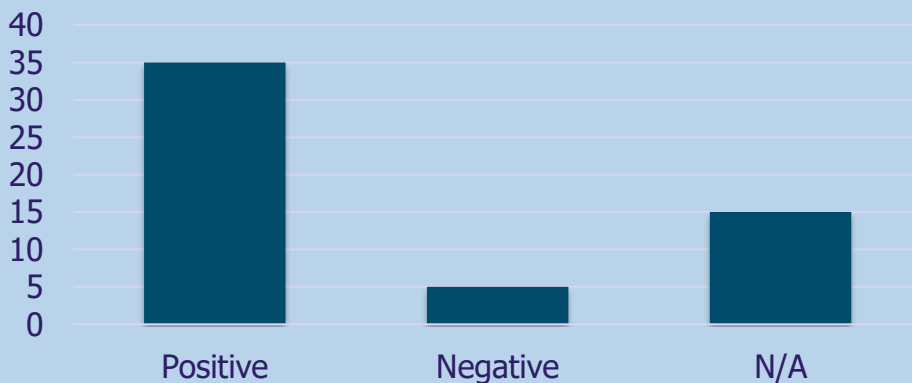
- More information on where to go for further help and which options are available

Individual comments were made around bringing back a service for Ear Syringing and Wax Removal, and more and quicker options available to request new tubing or adjustments. Other comments mentioned that the staff could have been more supportive and understanding. One comment mentioned that it would be helpful for service providers to share patient record information between them.

Sentiments of experiences with CamTAD Hearing Support



CamTAD were mentioned in 24% of all responses across all providers, and so we have broken down these comments below to discuss the sentiments and key themes experienced by their service users.



64% of respondents left positive comments about the service they received from CamTAD:

- **Helpful, friendly, supportive staff that make you feel cared for**
- **Excellent, efficient, very good general service provided**
- **Postal service for replacement batteries and tubing**
- **Home visits**
- **Speed of service**

Individual positive responses mentioned telephone service, cleaning and servicing, time and availability of support, and good advice and general communication.

The respondents negative comments were surrounding the service not being fully open due to Covid restrictions, that they haven't been able to get cleaning or retubing, and one respondent stated they had not heard from CamTAD in a while.

The N/A comments were from respondents naming CamTAD as a service provider they had used, but not left any information about how they felt about that service.

Sentiments of experiences with CamTAD Hearing Support

The majority of responses of sentiments regarding CamTAD Hearing Support were positive, and below are some of those responses to demonstrate the strong impact their service had on their service users.



"Camtad sent someone to our house to repair dome/tubes to the hearing aids and provided more batteries. Excellent service."

"A phone call to Camtad, then a visit from a member of staff to re-tube. Was very quick and good."

"Camtad hearing support also as always very friendly, supportive organisation who when services were able to return by appointment, booking were willing and able to be contacted for cleaning re-tubing service."



"Thank you so much Camtad, you really are excellent."

"Thanks to Camtad i was well cared for."

"The service has been very good during the pandemic. Could not fault Camtad service."

"Camtad - always very supportive and helpful."



"I was able to contact Camtad by telephone which was a great help and was answered by one of you staff who was very pleasant and helpful."

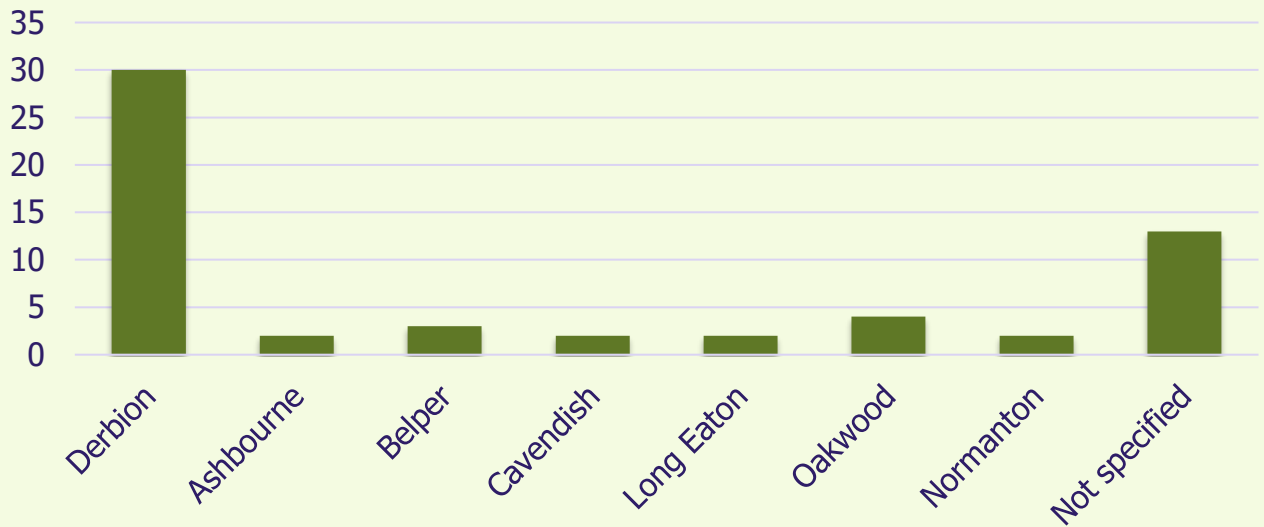
"It is reassuring to have Camtad."

"Batteries sent by post had a hearing test and was fitted with updated hearing aids. Everything was perfect, great service from Camtad."

"There is more to hearing loss then just hearing aids. The advise and care given by Camtad is a lifeline."

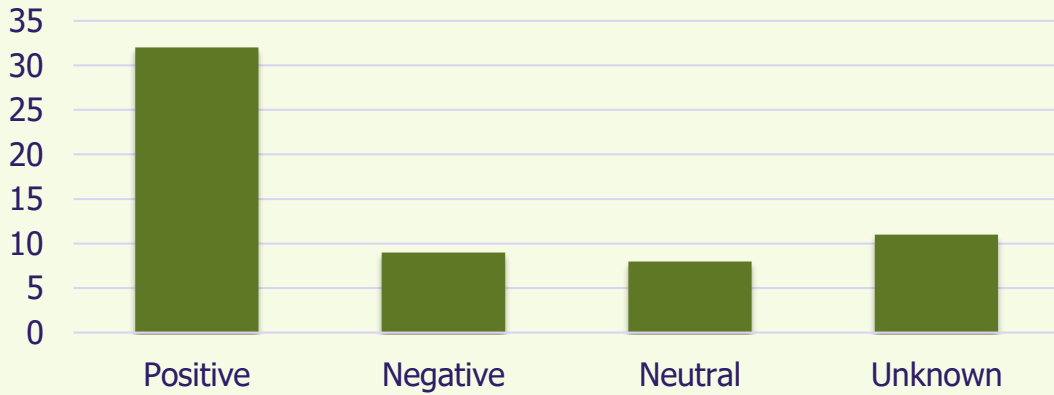


Location of Specsavers Services



Over half of all respondents stated that the Specsavers branch they use for their hearing aid services is the Derby City 'Derbion' shopping centre branch. A further 22% entered Derby, so this was ambiguous as to which branch in Derby they used. 25% of those who answered used services from outlying branches as detailed above.

How have you found your care?



The majority of respondents were happy with the care they received from their Specsavers branch with 42% describing their sentiment between excellent, very good and fine.

The main themes of the positive responses were the availability of batteries, and that the staff were friendly, helpful, competent, courteous and they made the service users feel cared for and listened to.

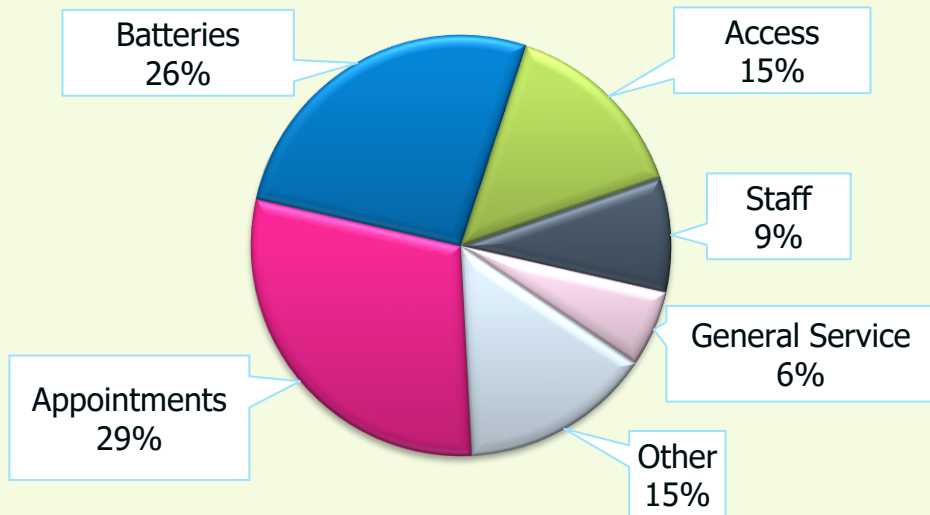
There were individual positive comments about prompt service, appointment availability and good hygiene standards.

“Very satisfied with the service received”

Of the negative responses, the main issue raised was a lack of communication from Specsavers either entirely or regarding follow up reviews and servicing of the hearing aids. 27% visited a branch and felt uncomfortable due to it being noisy and busy, or didn't feel safe.

There were individual comments stating that Specsavers couldn't provide all of the services that they needed, they were not happy with the fit or battery life of the hearing aid received, and that there was no full test given. Others felt they were not able to access a Specsavers branch due to Covid or care related travel restrictions.

What worked well?



Respondents were very happy about the availability and promptness of appointments, and the ease and speed at which they received replacement batteries either in branch or by post.

Access to the provider was good, with praise for being able to access the service locally and having good parking facilities. The staff were considered to be helpful and the general service was found to be good.

Individual comments were received about the no fuss service, testing being thorough, and a test and adjustment achieved at the time of the appointment. Other comments stated that they felt well informed, and that the hearing aid they were provided was of a high standard.




“The service was carried out within a week or so and everyone involved was professional and very friendly and helpful.”

“Easy to contact and make appointment”

“Being able to collect new batteries, or have new tubing without the need for an appointment.”

“This consultant did copious tests which i have never had before and a detailed and lengthy period was taken by this man. He resolved the problems and i am now hearing much better.”



Is there anything that could be improved?

58% of respondents said there was nothing that could be improved or did not enter any suggestions. The main points raised for suggestions for improvement were around communication from the provider regarding follow up care, having the option for a postal battery service to continue even though Covid restrictions have eased, and concerns as to whether or not the staff are suitably trained and knowledgeable to give full and correct advice.



"People should be told what to expect as the batteries used need to be altered frequently. This is noticeable when there is a different tone when batteries are running down."

"A home visit or help with hearing aids, no doubt this is impossible."

"I would like the service returned to community centre, Mickleover."

"Very limited range of hearing aid supplied or colours. To improve it is suggested that private hearing care may be the answer."

"Information displayed regarding other services e.g. tube replacement."

"I have little confidence the staff are trained to a level that one would expect of a professional audiologist."

"Specsavers would not post batteries to me once the shop re-opened. I still did not want to use bus or be in town centre."

"Better communication/explanation, more time on tests."



Location of Scrivens Services

6 respondents used Scrivens services and the given locations were as follows:

- Appletree surgery, Duffield
- Duffield
- Heanor
- Stapleford
- Chellaston
- Swadlincote

How have you found your care?

2 of the 6 respondents stated that the care they received from Scrivens has been good.

1 respondent has been isolating and not able to accept an in-person appointment.

1 respondent visited Duffield branch and then switched branch to Heanor who resolved an issue they had.

1 respondent visited the Stapleford branch but did not describe how they felt about the care.

1 respondent had been referred to Scrivens but didn't make it clear as to whether they have used the service.

“I was very happy with the service from Scriven's with my NHS hearing aids”

What worked well?

The service from Scrivens was described as friendly and helpful, with respondents most impressed with the option to have batteries requested by telephone and sent by post, and appointments available with an audiologist who covers several branches.

Is there anything that could be improved?

Individual suggestions made were that they would like the service to be closer to home, and that it would be helpful for the hospital medical files to be shared with the provider so that they were not explaining medical conditions twice. One comment mentioned that they were reluctant to schedule a regular check up with Scrivens as they did not feel cared for by the staff.

After a transition of services from UHDB to the community, has your service changed?

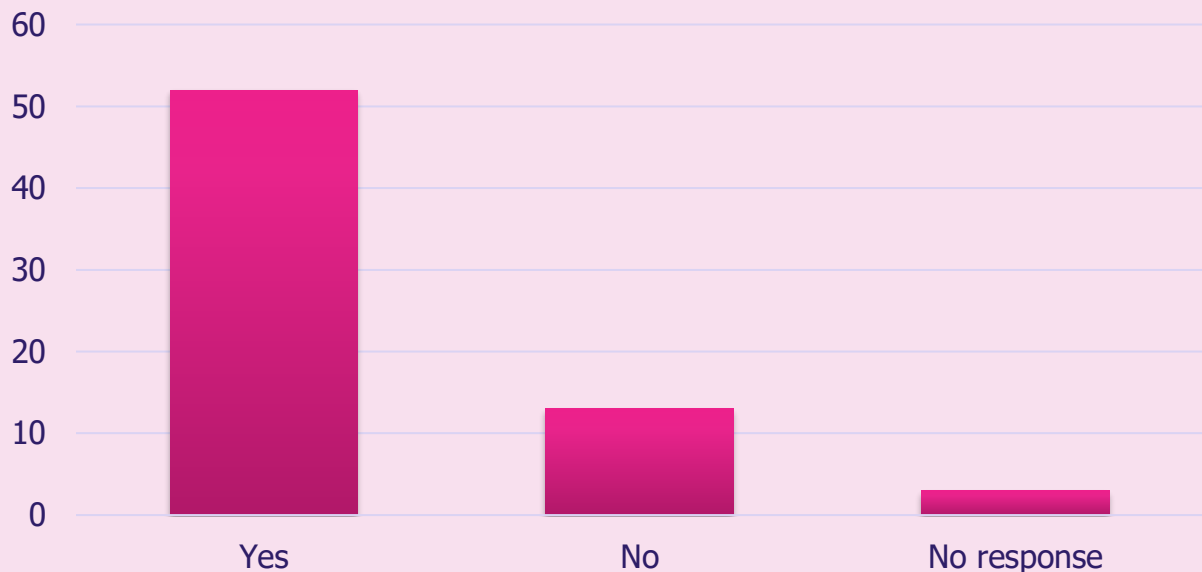
Around 2018, some patients with a routine hearing loss service who attended the Royal Derby Hospital and/or London Road Community Hospital received a letter informing them of changes to their hearing aid services. The letter advised the selected patients to transfer from these hospitals onto the high street or into the community.

Were you one of these patients who was transferred from the hospital to community hearing aid services?



30% of the 227 responses were patients who had had their care transferred from the hospital to an alternative provider.

Have you transferred to a community service?



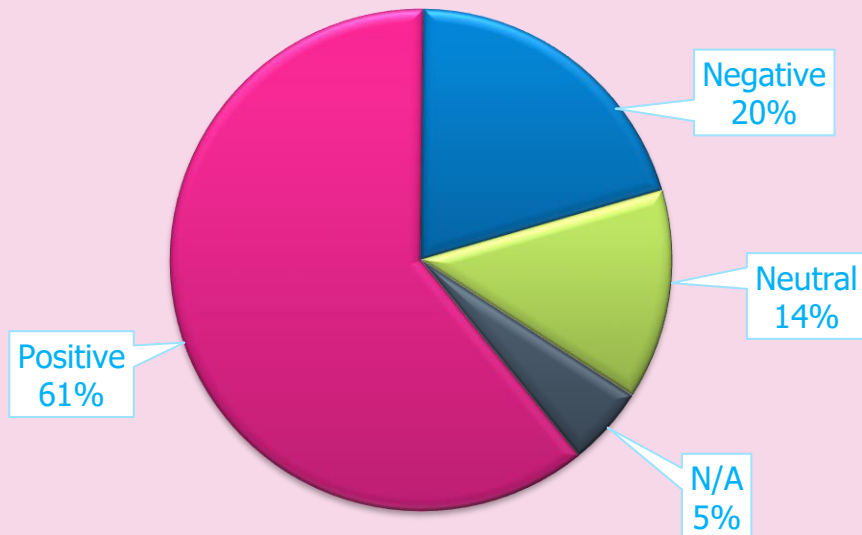
76% of those who were notified of the transition of services actually went ahead with transferring. Of the respondents who stated no or didn't answer the previous question about being transferred, none of them did then say they had changed providers in this question and so these responses are only from those who said Yes in the previous question.

What is your reason for not transferring to community services yet?

Respondents had individual circumstances around their choice not to transfer to a community services, but negatively 23% felt they did not know where to go to or felt that they were given no choice about no longer being under the care of the hospital. 23% found their own alternative provider.

Individual comments included delays through Covid lockdown restrictions or moving house with the intention of accessing a service in future, or no longer requiring the service. One individual tried to access a high street service but couldn't be seen as they were under the age of 55.

How did you find the transition from the hospital services to the community services?



The positive comments described the transition from hospital services to community services as very good, easy, quick and smooth and for some that this was more convenient for them.



“Much more convenient than hospital appointments, no problems.”



“No problems, everything transitioned smoothly.”

Individual negative comments mentioned that the change had been difficult or frustrating for them, and there were concerns about the knowledge of the staff, longer waits for appointments and follow up checks, and a general disappointment regarding being passed to a commercial entity rather than a hospital.

“I was disappointed and unsure”



“I just did it. No effort required, but I was disconcerted to have to refer myself to a strictly commercial organisation, whose primary concern is profit.”



Do you have any comments about the transition of services?

50% of respondents left negative comments regarding the transition of services.

Key points mentioned:

Not a good idea, unhelpful, such a shame

Private firms gaining profit/privatisation of NHS

Not given a choice and misinformed

Would feel more secure knowing there is knowledge from an audiologist available

Physical access to the service was difficult (stairs)



“Community service not upto hospital standards”

“The companies are commercial, not caring and my experience was they were taking me on under sufferance and giving me the minimal service they could.”

“Appalled at further privatisation of NHS services!”

“Disappointing I was never given any choice”

“Bit shocked to have to transfer out, but fortunately it has worked out ok for me.”



40% of respondents didn't have any comments regarding the transition of service or felt the question not applicable.

10% had positive responses, stating that the transition was very good, easy and an obvious decision.



“Seems easy and obvious thing to do.”



Do you have any other comments?

67% of respondents left no comments or stated no, they had nothing to comment further about the entire hearing aid service they received.

A further 17% left positive comments thanking the staff that were involved in their care, and the general provision of care received.



"Keep up the good work in providing an excellent service."

"When i had a small problem i contacted the audiology dept at Royal Derby and was seen quickly and problem solved."

"They have done a good job throughout."



"Present system works well. People very helpful and efficient."



"It was all very professional, explanations given as to what was happening. Very interesting."

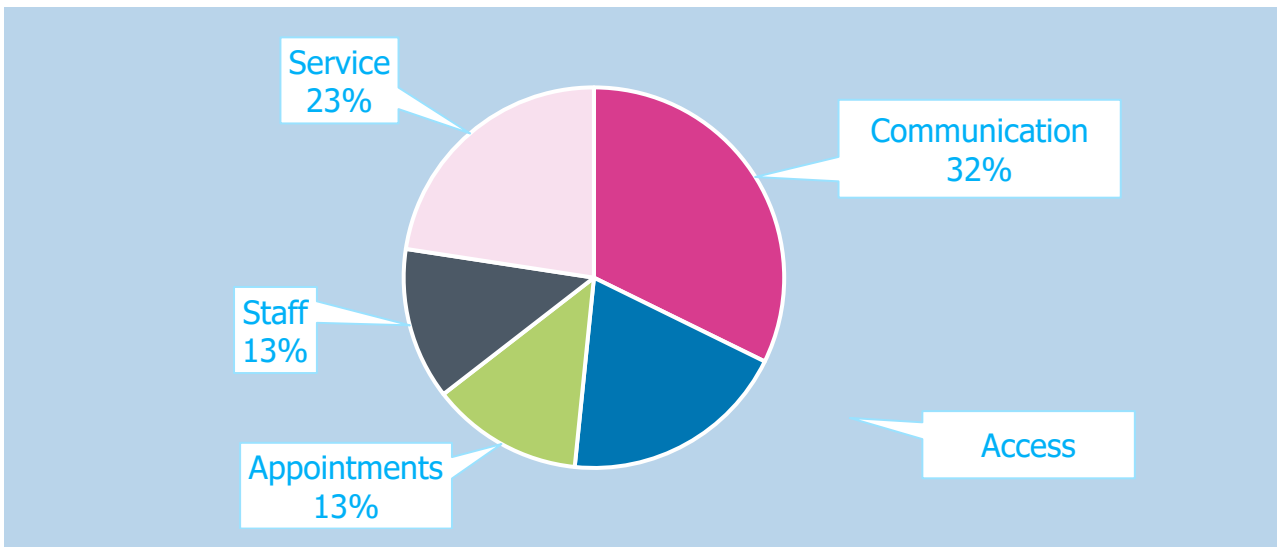
"Have always been very well looked after with my aids, really can't hear without them."

"Yes generally I am impressed with audiologists, having attended clinics for over 50 years it is nice to be treated as a patient with intelligence, and discuss solutions."

"Helpful, friendly staff at every point of contact. Had time to listen to my concerns."



Do you have any other comments?



15% left neutral or negative comments and suggestions about the hearing aid service that they had received.

The key themes are:

Communication:

- More information regarding hearing aid and battery options, and their health condition
- More contact in general, better explanation around transference of service provision

Service:

- Lack of service available to those in care home settings, could this be implemented
- General standard of commercial care not as good as being seen by professionals in a hospital setting
- One respondent stated her partner had been transferred but they hadn't and now the household is covered by two different providers

Access:

- More local service required, community provider was crowded and noisy

Individual comments around appointments included it would be good to have more regular checks, and there was a long wait to be seen. One comment regarding staff was that the "care element seems lacking" but also that two respondents had felt a lack of understanding from staff around their health condition in that it was difficult to hear staff who were not facing them when speaking or were wearing masks/face coverings.

Summary of experiences

The majority of respondents identified as white ethnicity, over 65 and a split between male and female.

Most respondents had UHDB as their main provider, based predominantly at London Road Community Hospital. The large majority of respondents across all providers were happy with their experiences, namely the overall service, staff and communication. Improvements could be made around access.

Most respondents were not users who had had their care transferred over in 2018 but of those who had, the majority had accepted the transition and felt positively about it.

Suggestions and comments around hearing aid services overall were around more local services, and more information and communication from providers.

Healthwatch Derby would like to thank CamTAD and all those who took part in the project.

Responses from CamTAD and UHDB

CamTAD – Comments on behalf of the Committee/Trustees

Hearing loss is very much the 'poor relation' when it comes to disabilities and every chance we have to delve into its problems and services connected with it is very much appreciated by us.

Please keep in touch and again many thanks for all your work with this project.

On behalf of the Committee/Trustees

CamTAD Hearing Support

UHDB – Comments from Head of Adult Audiology

Page 10: How have you found your care with UHDB? 29% of comments stated that their hospital appointment had been postponed or that they were unable to get an appointment.

“There was a national directive from NHS England to cease Audiology outpatient activity for a period early on in the pandemic.”

Page 10: How have you found your care with UHDB? Individual comments were made that one person was disappointed that their hearing test was delayed due to the wax removal service being stopped but that after having this privately they were able to continue as usual and another that no treatment had been received but it was unclear as to the reasons why or what barriers this person faced.

“Wax removal is a service provided by ENT and not Audiology. It is commissioned by the CCG. It is also available on a private basis but is not part of the Audiology service.”

Page 12: Is there anything that could be improved? Access: More local service without needing to travel into town.

“Most aspects of the Audiology service are available at 7 community locations as well as the Royal Derby and Florence Nightingale Community Hospital.”

Responses from CamTAD and UHDB

UHDB – Comments from Head of Adult Audiology

Page 12: Is there anything that could be improved? Access: More contact options other than email.

“Phone and text options are also available.”

Page 12: Is there anything that could be improved? Information: More information on where to go for further help and which options are available.

“We are currently working on expanding the patient information and signposting to other agencies on our section of the Trust website.”



Page 22: What is your reason for not transferring to community services yet? 23% felt they did not know where to go to or felt that they were given no choice about no longer being under the care of the hospital.

“The letters to patients contained all of the information regarding their choice of provider along with relevant contact details.”



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