

# Research exploring how choice is working in NHS adult hearing services

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We want to find out more about how choice is working in NHS adult hearing services in England. This is an opportunity to tell us about your experiences and to share your views on whether the interests of patients are well served by the current arrangements for adult hearing services.

We invite you to respond to our [online survey](#). Alternatively, you can contact us by emailing [aqp@monitor.gov.uk](mailto:aqp@monitor.gov.uk) or writing to:

Survey – AQP in adult hearing services  
Co-operation and Competition Department  
Monitor  
3rd Floor Wellington House  
133-155 Waterloo Road  
London  
SE1 8UG

We welcome your responses by **Thursday 4 September 2014**.

## **What services are the focus of our research project?**

The focus of our research project is adult hearing services. These are community-based services for people with suspected or diagnosed age-related hearing loss, and are most frequently used by people who are aged 55 or over. A process called 'any qualified provider' (AQP) has been used to offer choice in these services in many areas in England.

## **What does choice mean?**

Choice is usually offered through AQP, which is a way of commissioning healthcare services funded by the NHS. When a patient is referred to an adult hearing service, he or she can choose which provider to go to for that service from a list of qualified providers in the area (such as a hearing clinic at a hospital or on the high street). Patients can choose a provider based on what is important to them, such as somewhere that is close to home or work, is easy for them to access, has shorter waiting times, or good customer service.

## **What are adult hearing services?**

People are referred to the services by their GP. Once referred, patients will have an initial assessment to test their hearing to see whether they could benefit from hearing aids. The service provider will also fit the hearing aids if they are needed. The patient will be offered a follow-up appointment and may also visit the hearing clinic on other occasions to have their hearing aid maintained, adjusted, cleaned, or to find out about other support and equipment that could be helpful.

## **Why are we looking into choice in adult hearing services?**

Adult hearing services were one of the first NHS services commissioned locally using any qualified provider. More than half of commissioners now use it for these services. We want to understand whether any qualified provider in adult hearing services works well for patients and whether it could be improved.

We hope that our work in this area will offer insights into whether being able to choose an adult hearing service can deliver good outcomes for patients, and if so how. We hope that this will help commissioners to make better decisions for patients.

This research responds to the [Fair Playing Field Review](#) recommendation that we develop the evidence on the risks, costs and benefits of extending patient choice, particularly in community-based services.

## **How can you get involved?**

We want to hear from people and organisations with an interest in this area. There are separate sets of questions for people who use adult hearing services, for commissioners, for GPs and for providers, and their respective representative organisations. Your contribution to this research is invaluable.

**If you would like to speak to us about our research project, please email us at [aqp@monitor.gov.uk](mailto:aqp@monitor.gov.uk) or call us on 020 3747 0000.**

## **What is the timetable for our research project?**

Project launch:	<b>7 July 2014</b>
Deadline for responding to the questionnaire:	<b>4 September 2014</b>
Monitor to publish findings:	<b>Early 2015</b>