

Reference:	FOI.15891.24
Subject:	Wax removal services
Date of Request:	5 November 2024

Requested:

1. Does the Health Board currently commission an ear wax removal service or services within primary care or community ear care services, available to all patients registered with GP practices within the health board's boundary, as per Welsh Government's Ear Wax Management Primary and Community Care Pathway (WHC/2020/014)?
2. If it does, how can a patient access this service or services when it is considered clinically necessary and/or self-care advice, if appropriate, has been unsuccessful? Please include whether patients can self-refer to this service or not.
3. If the Health Board does commission this service or services within primary care or community ear care services, please provide the name or names of those commissioned providers and their address or addresses.
4. Does the Health Board have a policy or guidance on ear wax removal and/or referral pathways for its primary care providers for patients for whom the benefit of ear wax removal is clinically indicated?
5. If the Health Board has issued such guidance, please provide a copy.
6. Have there been any changes to this service within your Health Board in the last year? For example, it has been extended or reduced, or it is available in different areas.
7. If the Health Board does not commission this service in primary or community care:
 - a. How could a patient within the Health Board area access this service if needed? Are there any restrictions on who could access this service?
 - b. What are the barriers preventing the establishment or commissioning of a service in line with Welsh Government's Ear Wax Management Primary and Community Care Pathway (WHC/2020/014)?

Response:

1. Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) does not commission an ear wax management service, but alternatively provides an in-house ear wax management service via Primary Care and the Secondary Care Audiology service.
2. Patients can self-refer into the UHB's in-house service by either phoning the UHB's Communication Hub or using a QR code and making an online request. The secondary care Audiology service is available for those patients who attend for an Audiology appointment but are found to have wax that prevents the completion of the hearing appointment pathway.
3. Not applicable
4. Yes, the UHB has developed an Ear Management Community Clinic Service Specification and an Audiology – SOP: Aud 24 Wax Management – including micro-suction.

5. The UHB provides a copy of the UHB's Ear Management Community Clinic Service Specification at Attachment 1, and a copy of Audiology – SOP: Aud 24 Wax Management – including micro-suction at Attachment 2.
6. There have been no changes to service provision within the last year. The service continues to be available across the UHB, offered at six (6) Community sites (provided by community staff) and six (6) secondary care locations (provided by Audiology). Audiology can also provide a service for housebound patients if needed, following a referral from a GP etc.
- 7.a. Details on how to access the service are provided in response to question 2. The only restriction to service access is that the community team do not provide a service for housebound patients or those aged under 18. These patients must be referred by a GP or Advanced Nurse Practitioner into the Audiology service if there is an impact on hearing.
- b. The UHB experiences no barriers in meeting the requirements of Welsh Government's Ear Wax Management Primary and Community Care Pathway (WHC/2020/014).