

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Equality impact assessment

Hearing aids for adults with hearing loss: Existing use assessment

Scoping

1 Have any potential equality issues been identified during the scoping process? If so, what are they?

Several potential equality issues have been identified in line with equality considerations for the included technologies. Key issues include:

- The use of hearing aids in men from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is lower compared with use in higher socioeconomic groups ([Scholes et al, 2018](#)).
- People's ethnic, religious, and socio-cultural background may affect their views of hearing loss and digital hearing aids. The uptake and use of hearing aids is lower among Black, Asian and other minority groups than in the general population partly due to lower levels of self-reported hearing difficulty among these groups. However, even when hearing difficulty is self-reported, hearing aid use remains lower among many ethnic minority groups ([Taylor et al, 2023](#)).
- Some people would benefit from support or information on hearing loss and hearing aids in languages other than English.
- People who are deaf or have hearing loss may need reasonable adjustments when accessing healthcare services, which could include a sign language interpreter ([RNID, 2025](#)).

- Some people may need additional support or may struggle to use hearing aids, such as people:
 - with neurodiverse conditions
 - with a learning disability
 - with a visual, or cognitive impairment
 - with problems with manual dexterity
 - who are less used to using digital technologies in general
 - who do not have access to smart phone, tablet or a computer or internet (if internet is needed).
- There are groups who may struggle to access or attend appointments including people with mobility issues, people living in care homes and people living in remote areas.

2 Have any potential health inequality issues been identified during the scoping process? If so, what are they?

Several potential health inequality issues have been identified in line with equality considerations for the included technologies. Key issues include

- Hearing loss affects some groups disproportionately. The prevalence of hearing loss increases sharply with age with more than half of adults aged 55 years and over having measurable hearing loss. Adults with hearing loss demonstrate poorer overall health outcomes (for example, physical health, cognitive functioning and wellbeing) and lower levels of physical activity and function compared with people without hearing loss. Hearing aids have the potential to improve cognitive and wellbeing factors for this group ([Goodwin et al, 2025](#)).
- Men are more likely than women to develop hearing loss from occupational factors. This could be because of a smaller number of women working in jobs that can result in occupational deafness ([HSE, 2023](#)). There is a higher prevalence of hearing

loss in men from the lowest socioeconomic background because of working in jobs with a risk of exposure to damaging levels of noise.

- Patient experts mentioned that young people transitioning from children's service to an adult hearing service often experience difficulties such as lack of support and poor continuity of care during this period, leading to negative impacts on their wellbeing and independence in managing their hearing care.

3 What is the preliminary view as to what extent the committee needs to address the potential issues set out in questions 1 and 2?

The committee should consider all the equality issues when making recommendations. There is a pre-existing health inequality in prevalence of hearing loss by age, sex, and by socioeconomic status. There is also a pre-existing health inequality in access, use and adherence rates by socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Innovative features of hearing aids could improve access, uptake and adherence for some of these groups. However, these may not be improved for those who are unable to engage with these innovative features due to a lack of accessibility features, lack of mobile phones or computers, poor or unavailable internet connection or data allowance or lack of experience with use of computers or smartphones. The committee may need to consider how innovative features of hearing aids could be implemented to ensure these factors are considered.

4 Has any change to the draft scope been agreed to highlight the potential issues set out in questions 1 and 2?

The potential equality issues were discussed at the scoping workshop. Stakeholders agreed with the potential issues that were raised, and an additional equality issue was included:

- young people transitioning from children's service to an adult hearing service often experience difficulties such as lack of support and poor continuity of care during this period, leading to negative impacts on their wellbeing and independence in managing their hearing care.
- people in care homes may struggle to access or attend appointments

5 Has the stakeholder list been updated as a result of additional equality or health inequality issues identified during the scoping process?

No additional stakeholders related to potential equality issues were identified during the scoping process.

Approved by associate director: Rebecca Albrow

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