

## **MEDIA BRIEFING SHEET**

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Our priority at Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust is quality patient care and patient confidentiality. We would encourage all media to respect individual privacy and confidentiality.

### **What was the nature of the review?**

During 2011, the Trust became aware of a number of patients whose hearing loss had been previously undetected despite testing within the Department. It has been identified that each of these patients was originally assessed by the same doctor. As a result of a review of patient records, Alder Hey has identified additional patients assessed by the doctor and who may require further testing.

### **What area of medical practice is involved?**

The doctor worked in our Audiology Department. This area of practice involves hearing testing for the detection and management of children with long term hearing loss, particularly those referred from the newborn hearing screening programme, or those children at higher risk of hearing loss because of underlying medical conditions. Hearing testing in children can be particularly difficult because of their developmental immaturity and because the results of hearing tests can vary from day to day.

### **How and when were the concerns identified?**

In 2011 the Trust became aware of a single child previously assessed by the doctor as normal but who was later found to have profound hearing loss.

Subsequently, an audit of the doctor's practice was conducted and it was identified that there are nine patients with previously undetected hearing loss requiring hearing aids. The discrepancy in testing was discussed with the families at diagnosis. It was agreed that a review of all patients seen by the doctor would be undertaken.

### **What does this mean for patients?**

We have identified all patients who were assessed by the doctor concerned. The majority of these patients have also been seen by other members of our Audiology Team and we therefore believe the risk of misdiagnosis is low. We have assessed each patient individually and are making contact with the families of children who require further testing. A helpline is available for anyone who has any concerns.

### **What advice is available to patients?**

A dedicated help-line has been set up for any families who may have concerns. The Trust has set up a dedicated helpline for families/patients who may be concerned. All calls will be treated in the strictest confidence. The helpline number is 0151 252 5913 and 0151 252 5316.

[Helpline Opening Times](#)

Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> and Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> January:	8.30am - 8.00pm
Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January:	9.00am – 4.00pm
Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> – Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> January:	9.00am – 5.00pm
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> and Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> January:	9.00am- 4.00pm
Thereafter Monday – Friday:	9.00am – 5.00pm

### **What will happen next?**

The Trust has identified all patients assessed by the doctor and examined all relevant files in order to determine who should be re-tested. These patients will be contacted directly.

### **Have all those affected been informed?**

The Trust has identified all children who require further assessment and is in the process of contacting them. Those who do not require another test, but whose parents or guardians are concerned, can contact the Trust via a dedicated helpline which will provide further guidance and advice for individual families.

### **What has the Trust done to ensure this will not happen again?**

The Trust has taken this issue very seriously and has launched an extensive internal investigation. Alder Hey has also referred the doctor to the General Medical Council. The investigation has included the review of patient records to identify any other patients who have been assessed by the doctor concerned.

### **Why have you decided to inform patients and the media now, when you have known about this for several months?**

As soon as we became aware of this issue, we had to reassess thousands of patients who have been assessed by the doctor concerned. The majority of these have been assessed since by another Audiologist and therefore do not require further assessment. The Trust has followed an in-depth process to identify all patients who require further assessment. This process has also established which patients are most at risk included making sure that those to be recalled are prioritised accordingly. This process is now complete and the Trust is communicating proactively and openly with parents and the media in order that it is fully transparent in relation to this issue.

### **When did the doctor leave the Trust?**

The doctor left his post in April 2011.

### **What were his reasons for doing so?**

The Trust is unable to comment on this.

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## **Alder Hey's Audiology Service**

Alder Hey's Audiology Department is one of the largest in NW England and carries out hearing tests on children from Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley and some from the wider

area. The service also sees children who are receiving tertiary care at Alder Hey, particularly children under the renal, cystic fibrosis and oncology teams.

The service is multi-disciplinary and provides audiometry support for the ENT department. However its main specialty is the detection and ongoing management of deafness in children, from birth to 19years.

The department participates fully in the Newborn Hearing Screening Quality Assurance Program and has consistently attained well above average scores in the last three assessments.

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