

# The health of children's hearing services in England

National Deaf Children's Society briefing



## What's the problem?

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High quality hearing services are vital for deaf children and young people. But, in 2012, NHS reports showed that **one third of audiology services were failing to meet basic standards in audiology**. We think this is unacceptable.

We have no reason to think things have improved since 2012 – especially as **inspections of children's hearing services have been scrapped**. This is leaving too many families in the dark about the quality of their child's audiology service.

Services can choose to join a scheme<sup>1</sup> to become **accredited**<sup>2</sup> and prove to patients that they offer a good service, but they don't have to. Only information about those who are accredited is made public – we know nothing about services that fail to gain accreditation after an inspection, or those who don't take part in the scheme at all.

The Government have refused to make sure all services are independently inspected. So, we decided to survey children's audiology services ourselves to find out more.

## What do we know?

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Our survey found that **two children's audiology services were judged by independent assessors not to be providing good enough care**.

We also found that **more than a third had not even signed up to join the scheme**. They were most likely to say that they hadn't joined the scheme because they didn't have enough staff to prepare for an inspection, or they couldn't afford to join the scheme.

Crucially, **accredited services were less likely to report staffing reductions or problems with long waiting times for appointments**. They were also more likely to have a training programme in place for their audiologists to update their skills and knowledge than those that weren't.

This shows why **inspections of children's audiology services are crucial to boosting quality**. We want to see every service in England accredited and providing high quality audiology care to deaf children and young people.

## What should happen now?

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It's simple.

We want the quality of **all children's audiology services to be independently assessed** and for information from these assessments to be made public.

You can help us make this happen by emailing your local clinical commissioning group (CCG) and NHS England. CCGs should be following government guidelines saying that they should choose services which are accredited and NHS England leads the NHS in England. Visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/listenup](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/listenup) to email your CCG and NHS England leads.

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<sup>1</sup> Visit <https://www.igips.org.uk/> to find out about the Improving Quality in Physiological Services Accreditation Programme

<sup>2</sup> Visit <https://www.ukas.com/about/about-accreditation/> to watch a short video explaining what accreditation is