



ACTION FOR TINNITUS RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

What Is The Difference Between NHS and Private Hearing Aids?

National Health Service Hearing Aids

The medical and technical professions work together as a team to provide on-going hearing aid management for the individual patient.

The NHS hearing aid(s) is supplied free on a loan basis with the earmoulds, batteries, repairs and advice free as an on-going service. If your hearing changes you will be re-assessed and appropriate aid(s) provided.

The patient is provided with a hearing aid(s) appropriate for their hearing loss, and these are carefully selected from a wide range of hearing aid models to cater for their needs.

The NHS range of hearing aids all have a telecoil (T) switch which can be used with a loop facility. Some of the NHS hearing aid models come in a range of three colors, beige, grey and brown. A comprehensive range of earmoulds are available, including non-allergic materials.

The range of NHS hearing aids is regularly reviewed to provide new technology which includes hearing aids with direct audio input, high frequency emphasis, automatic gain control (AGC), MT combined switch etc.

All audiology staff adhere to standards set by the British Society of Audiology and the British Association of Audiology Technicians. A full range of rehabilitation services are provided by the hearing therapist. Professional advice is available from the audiology and medical staff, for both patient and their family.

Hearing aids provided on the NHS are individually selected on the basis of medical and technical need and not necessarily what the patient would like cosmetically.

Of the aid types available on the NHS, the most commonly fitted are behind the ear models. Other types available are; Spectacle aids, in the ear canal and body worn aids, but these are only provided where a medical/technical need has been identified.

Hearing Aid clinics and ENT departments have various waiting times. Patients are normally seen at the hearing aid centre, but home visits are available for the housebound. When the aid requires repair, a replacement one will be offered.

Private Hearing Aids

The hearing test and assessment is undertaken by the registered hearing aid dispenser. The dispenser must abide by the Hearing Aid Council Code of Practice.

Private hearing aids are expensive items to purchase (about £500 plus) and the repair service may also be costly, as are batteries.

The range of private hearing aids is comprehensive, and many of the models now available are in-ear types which are especially made for each individual's ear and hearing specifications.

Some models are pre-programmed for a number of environments in which the user will regularly find themselves. Some are adjusted via a remote control unit. Others adjust themselves automatically to the most suitable setting, and may help to discriminate between sound and background noise.

Free home visiting services are available to customers.

The standards and activities of the private dispenser are regulated by the Hearing Aid Council, a statutory body established by the Hearing Aid Act 1968.

Hearing tests and examinations are undertaken and involve the customer in no obligation of any kind. They are available free of charge even when conducted in the home.

The dispenser will refer the customer to their doctor concerning any condition of the ear(s) which requires medical attention.

If a hearing aid is recommended, written particulars are provided and even after a product has been ordered there are a number of opportunities for the customer to change their mind at no cost. Some companies offer a 30-day free trial service. Check before you purchase.

Some aid companies offer renting as an alternative to purchasing the aid outright. Again, ask if this is available. Supportive aftercare provided by registered dispensers can be at the practice or in the comfort of the user's home, at no extra charge. Check beforehand if this is available. While the aid is away for repair or servicing the user can often be without an aid.