

# The UK National Eye Health and Hearing Study (UKNEHS)



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## Headline

About 50 years after the UK MRCs National Study of Hearing was planned in the 1970s, a new nationally representative population-based study of hearing and vision is underway in the UK, with the opportunity to provide high quality, up-to-date data on hearing loss, so that the UK can plan future services in the most effective way, improve outcomes for those affected, and develop a more effective public health strategy.

### Objectives:

- Effectiveness, Efficiency, Economy, Compliance, with digital transformation opportunities at the heart of the study.
- To identify the prevalence of hearing loss and vision impairment (and their causes) in the UK population aged 50 and over, providing an up-to-date and comprehensive picture of the UK's eye and hearing health.

## Pilot

The pilot has two components:

- 1<sup>st</sup> part involved assessing care home residents in seven randomly chosen care homes across the ICS. 25 residents per care home were invited to participate.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> part, a population-based study, started in late summer. 750 randomly selected people aged over 50 years old are being invited for sensory assessment in local community sites.



Fig 1: UKNEHS hearing field team members assessing and collecting data at a care home visit.

## What is involved?

### Survey themes

- Personal information, demographics, employment, family history.
- Health and social care needs, long term conditions, experience accessing services, perceived barriers to accessing services
- Digital & remote access technologies.
- Specific questionnaires relating to hearing ability, tinnitus, noise exposure and risk factors for hearing loss, health economics, quality of life, and access to services.

### Ophthalmic Testing:

- Included auto-refraction, focimetry, I-care tonometry, pachymetry, and visual field perimetry.

### Audiology Testing:

- The hearing assessment involves digital otoscopy and audiometry (TympaHealth), digits-in-noise test (HearX), and cognitive tests.
- Those with impacted ear wax are offered ear wax removal and those with unaddressed hearing loss referred for further support.

## Benefits

- Provide an up-to-date, comprehensive picture of the UK's eye and hearing health by gender, age, socio-economic group and geographical area.
- Measure the detection and treatment coverage rate of major vision and hearing loss to understand the effectiveness of current services and pathways.
- Help Government efficiently and effectively target UK spending.
- Ensure that vulnerable groups are accessing the services they need to reduce preventable sight and hearing losses.
- Ensure better support those living with sensory loss to receive the care that they need to participate fully in society.

## Take home message

Designed by a wide stakeholder group involving international agencies such as the WHO, this study is collecting data on prevalence, awareness, access to and take-up of services as well as the impact of hearing loss using the latest digital technologies.

As the UKNEHS moves towards a national study of 25,000 participants, the research team would be delighted to involve interested parties across the hearing sector, from hearing care professionals, academics and their institutions, charities, patients and public, who would like to play a role in this important, unique, inclusive, and cutting-edge national project. Those who are interested are invited to contact the UKNEHS team via [info@uknehs.org.uk](mailto:info@uknehs.org.uk).

Get behind this truly collaborative project that seeks to understand the scale and impact of hearing loss in our country.

## Funders

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