



Quality Improvement

Hearing Better: Reducing waiting times in Audiology

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Aim

Improve the number of people receiving an Audiology Diagnostic Test (across NCL Adult & Community services) within 6 weeks of referral from 41% to 70% by end of Dec 2023

Why this is important to patients

Longer waiting times increase the risk of undiagnosed hearing loss and delayed management/treatment. In children, this affects speech and language development, educational, social and communication skills, together with impact on mental and emotional wellbeing. For our ageing adult population, this affects personal safety, quality of life, social isolation, and cognitive decline. Service trajectories showed that the current backlog would take 1-3 years to reduce without the provision of additional clinics.

What we did

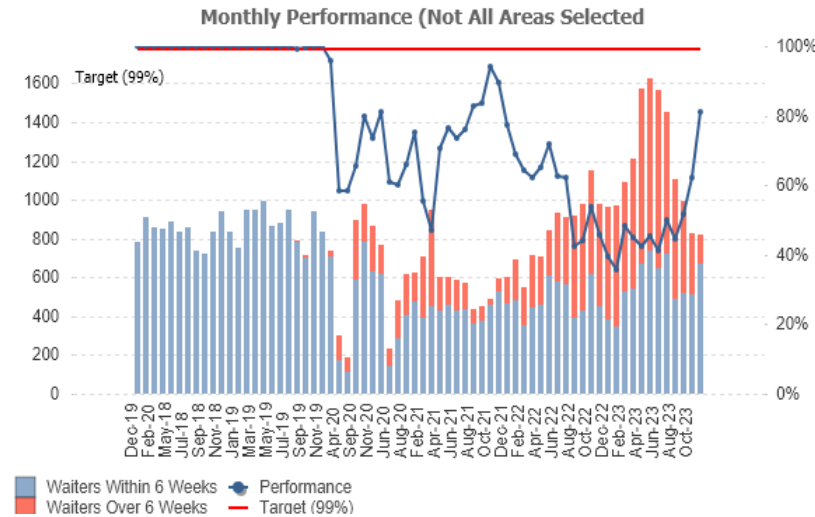
Plan: Analysed waiting times; clinics and trajectories; staffing; referral & attendance rates; local discharge criteria. Engaged with relevant stakeholders including senior management, HR, Bank Partners, Finance & Payroll teams, Executive Team.

Do: Implemented Enhanced Rate Overtime (ERO) for a period of four months from July 2023, with a local SOP outlining rationale, rates, eligibility criteria, and remuneration processes.

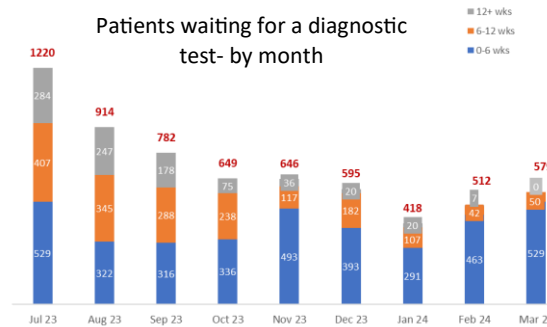
Study: Fortnightly meetings monitoring planning, uptake (staff & patients) and lessons learnt. Monthly reports and a mid-point analysis was conducted to determine impact as well as staff and patient feedback.

Act: Decision to extend pilot and extend to patients waiting on 18-week pathway & review patients.

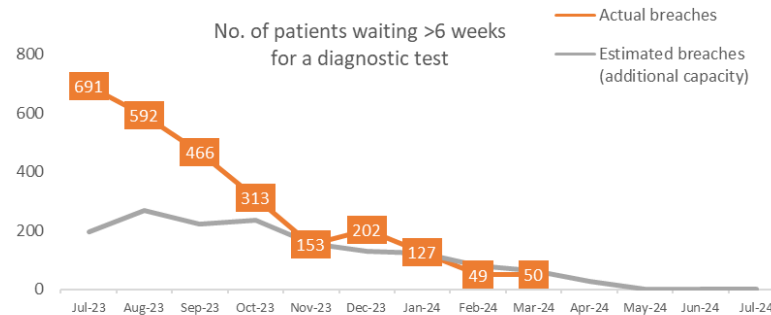
Monthly Audiology Performance



Patients waiting for a diagnostic test- by month



No. of patients waiting >6 weeks for a diagnostic test



Summary of Results

Mid-way review: An additional 193 appointment slots offered (versus 340 projected) with 95% attendance rate achieved.

October 23: 514 slots offered (total) with 92% attendance rate achieved. DM01 performance improved to 62% with 313 breaches.

November 23: DM01 performance improved to 81%. Backlog reduced to 154 patients waiting more than 6 weeks for a hearing test.

Learning

The planning phase, including approval process, took longer than expected, which meant that the pilot start date coincided with summer holidays and subsequent staff availability.

Appointment systems, allowing patient choice and providing reminders, are beneficial in reducing WNB/ DNA rates and will be piloted in clinics to further improve attendance rates.

Staff reported the project as a positive experience, reporting feeling motivated by the achievements seen.

NCL Enhanced Rate Overtime Uptake

