

Clearing The Way to Better Hearing: North Wales Primary Care Audiology Led Wax Removal Service

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Introduction

- Accessing NHS wax removal services has been a hot topic lately. With service provision variable across the Health Board
- The Welsh Government published its national pathway for ear wax removal ⁽¹⁾, highlighting that audiologists should be the main point of contact for wax removal.
- In 2020 BCU set up a first point of contact audiology led wax removal service, based in GP surgeries offering NHS wax removal.
- This poster explores the challenges to setting up and maintaining our service, along with the benefits to both patients and GP practices.

Wax removal service development

- “In rural North Wales, delays in access to ear care significantly affects patient quality of life. With ENT and audiology services under pressure, primary care microsuction offers a timely and effective solution”⁽²⁾
- Approximately 3% of the population in Wales present with ear wax each year ⁽²⁾, which equates to 96,000 patients a year. Prevalence of wax impaction increases with age ⁽³⁾, complications can include – hearing loss, pain, tinnitus and a blocked feeling.
- We are now working towards rollout of the service across all areas of BCU
- GP practices have welcomed the service however access to suitable rooms has been a challenge. We are exploring alternative options including a mobile audiology van and community healthcare facilities



Outcomes

- Over 17,000 patient contacts have been booked for the wax removal service since Jan 2020
- From April 2024 – March 2025 - total of 7242 appointments booked
- Of these 68% were treated and discharged without need of additional appointments
- Only 6.6% were found to have any abnormal findings

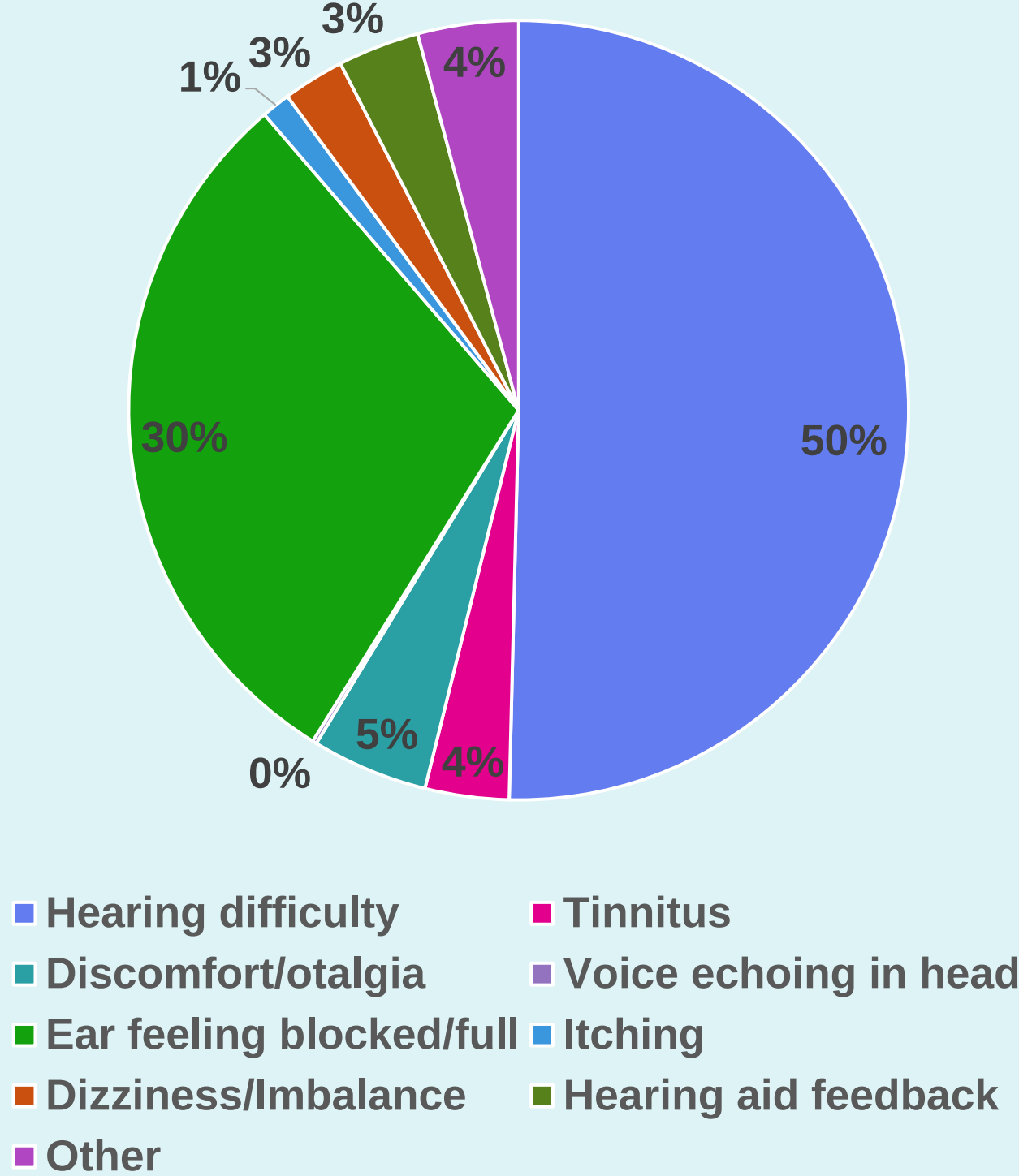
Service User Feedback

Gathered Nov-Dec 2024
55 responses obtained

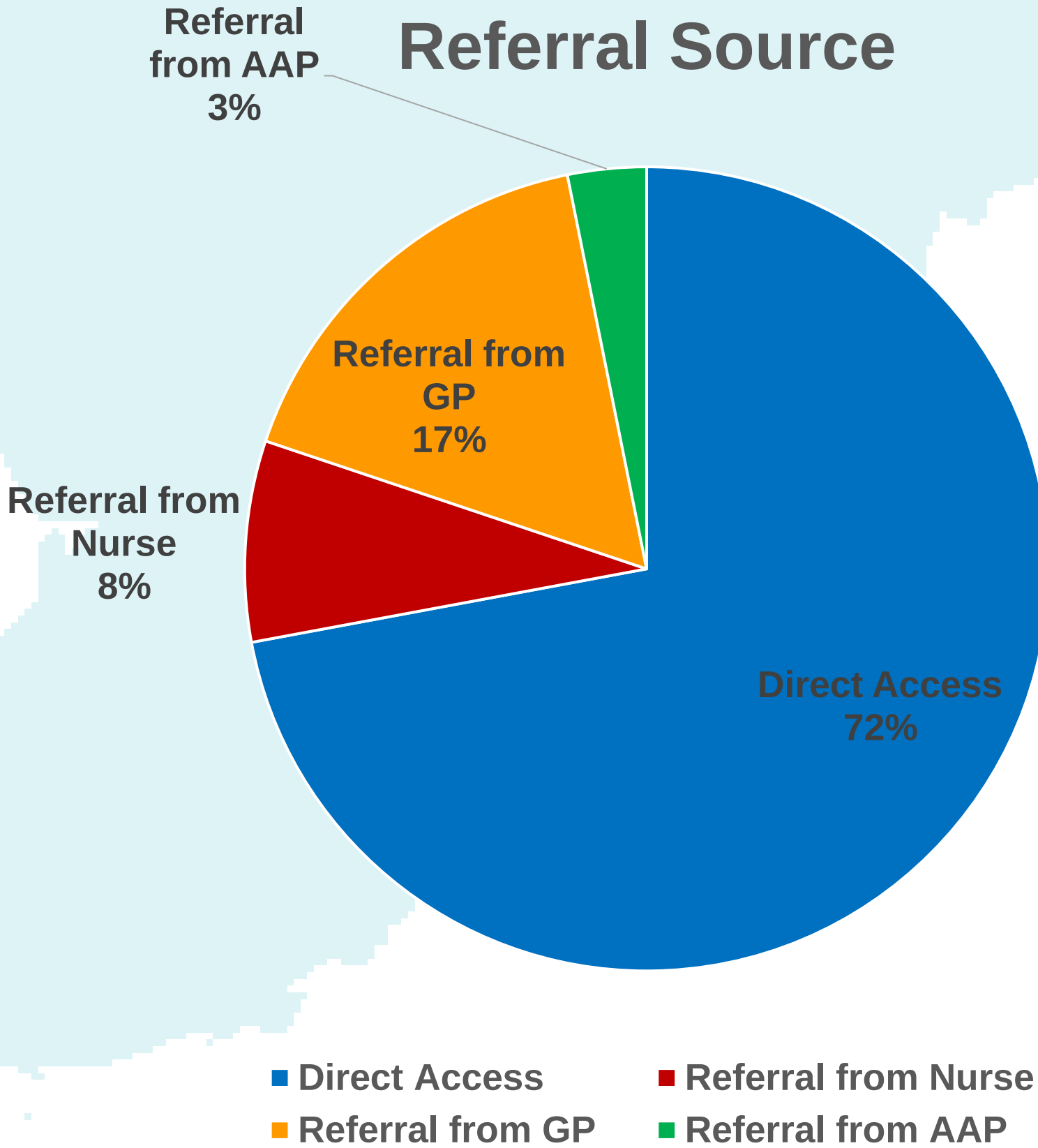
100% reported they were happy with the outcome of the appointment
100% reported they felt respected during the appointment

- Time waiting to access the service:
 - 82% reported an about right or shorter than expected wait time to access the service
 - 16% reported a longer than expected wait time to access the service
- Comments from service users
 - “Fantastic service, everything was explained well”
 - “Very pleasant experience and close to home”
 - “Explained things clearly. Very informative”

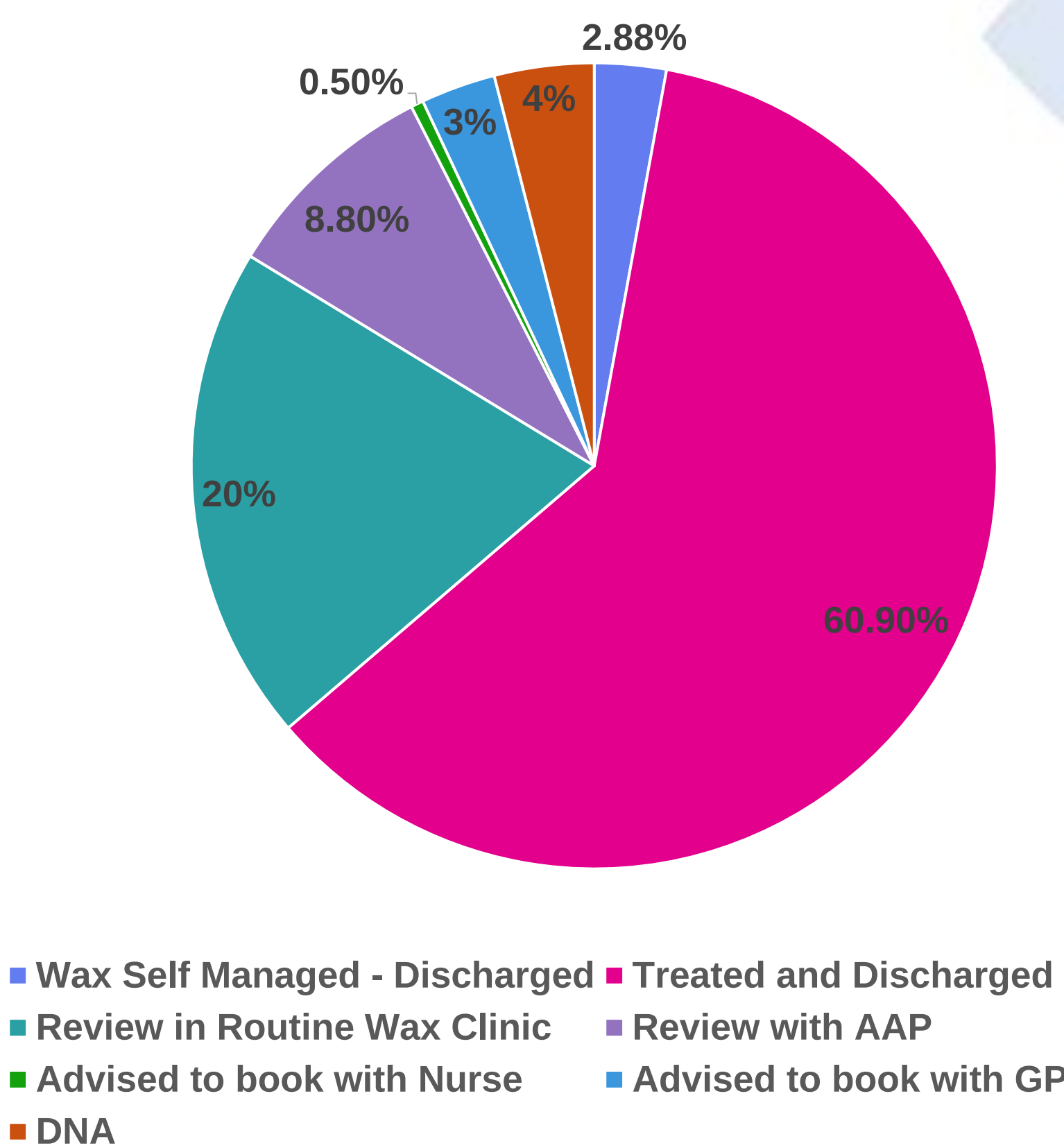
Symptom Reported



Referral Source



Outcome



Conclusions

We have been able to successfully deliver wax removal services in a community setting, delivering prudent healthcare close to home. Challenges remain as we work towards completing rollout of the service sustainably across BCU, we are looking to recruit Audiology Practitioners to assist with the next phase of the service, as well as exploring new and innovative ways to deliver the service from a variety of locations in the primary care setting.

Staff perspective - Audiology Associate Practitioner Band 4

"I work across a variety of settings, meeting different patients and staff every day, which keeps the role dynamic and rewarding. I regularly encounter a wide range of ear pathologies, many of which I never came across during my time in secondary care"

"I can honestly say it's the best job I've ever had. I really value the continuity of care with regular patients and the independence that comes with working under distance supervision."

References

1. Ear Wax Management Primary and Community Care pathway, Welsh Government, 2020, [Ear Wax Management Primary and Community Care Pathway \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)
2. RNID stop the block, 2025 [Stop The Block: the crisis of NHS ear wax removal in Wales](#)
3. BMJ (2019) Cerumen impaction. Best Practice. <http://bestpractice.bmj.com>



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North Wales Audiology Service



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