

Quality Improvement: Improving Performance against the Newborn Hearing Screening Key Performance Indicators

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Introduction

The Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP) is a national public health initiative designed to identify permanent childhood hearing loss early, enabling timely intervention and improved long-term outcomes. Performance is measured against five screening standards and two key performance indicators (KPIs): NH1 (coverage) and NH2 (timeliness of diagnostic assessment).

Regular monitoring of compliance against these standards by the NHSP local manager identified underperformance in NH1, prompting a quality improvement (QI) project. Screening staff collaborated to identify barriers and generate ideas, which were mapped into a driver diagram to guide improvement efforts. The introduction of the Gov.Notify text reminder system significantly improved performance against the NH1 standard. Subsequently, NH2 performance was reviewed, with nonattendance at audiology appointments emerging as a key issue. An investigation revealed missed communications and gaps in appointment delivery, particularly for weekend referrals and transfers. To address this, a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle was launched to trial the extension of the successful Gov.Notify system—originally used for screening—to diagnostic audiology appointments. This initiative aimed to improve NH1 coverage to $\geq 98\%$ and NH2 compliance to $\geq 90\%$, while reducing non-attendance and enhancing the family experience.

