

From Audit to Action: The First CI Referral Audit Steering Group

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BACKGROUND:

The Cochlear Implant Referral Report (CIRR)^[1], owned by BCIG, was established to evaluate cochlear implant referral pathways and support service improvement. Referral auditing enables identification of variation in onward referral for cochlear implant assessment, supports benchmarking of activity, and promotes equitable access to cochlear implant services. To inform future audit development, the first Audit Steering Group was hosted on 1 July to review current audit activity and explore opportunities for standardised data collection, enhanced reporting, and patient-centred service improvement.

OBJECTIVES:

The Steering Group aimed to review national CI referral audit findings. Assess opportunities to improve referral categorisation. Identify practical approaches to simplify auditing and reporting. Consider how audit data can be used to drive measurable service improvements.



METHODS:

- Participants:** 16 subject matter experts were invited based on their experience using the CIRR to support routine audit activity within their services. Stakeholders involved in the development of the CIRR were also invited to contribute their expertise and provide insight into current audit priorities.
- Workshop Design:** Collaborative workshop reviewing current audit processes, update on national referral data, and reporting outputs to identify priorities for future audit development and service improvement.

W1 CI Referral Report Categorisation Review: strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

W2 Future CI Referral Audits Reporting: priorities for enhancing audit processes and reporting.

W3 Meaningful Service Improvement: translating audit findings into quality improvement actions.

Data Collection: Small-group discussions and plenary feedback sessions captured on flip charts and post-it notes. Outputs were analysed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and priorities.

OUTCOMES & FEEDBACK

Several key themes emerged...

- W1** Participants highlighted the need for clearer and more consistent referral categories to improve data quality and standardisation across services.
- W2** Delegates provided a 'wish list' for future potential developments to the CI Referral Report and CI referral auditing process, to help guide future adaptations.
- W3** Discussions emphasised the importance of using audit findings to support continuous quality improvement, enabling services to identify barriers, monitor progress and implement evidence-based service improvements.

In one word, how would you describe today's event?

10 helpful insightful beneficial collaborative encouraging engaging sharing positively-insightful validating

Positive feedback was received from delegates. When asked to describe the day in one word, responses included:

How useful was today's Audit Steering Group in helping improve the audit process?

8.2
Extremely useful

Would you be likely to participate/attend another steering group?

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Yes

No

Maybe

Delegates reported the sharing of experiences and feeling heard and involved in shaping change, as the most useful aspects of the event.

On a scale of 1-10, the audit steering group was ranked as 8 in terms of usefulness in improving the audit process.

FINDINGS:

The Audit Steering Group has highlighted the value and need for continued conversations surrounding topics such as categorising, service improvements and the need for future potential developments of the CIRR. The first CI Referral Audit Steering Group represented an important step towards a more standardised, improvement-focused approach to CI referral auditing. The outcomes provide a foundation for future enhancements that will help ensure audit data is used not only to monitor activity but also to drive meaningful improvements in referral pathways, patient access and service quality.

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References: [1] British Cochlear Implant Group (BCIG). CI Referral Report (CIRR). Available at: www.bcig.org.uk.