



Audiology in Wales Quality Strategy and Framework for Delivery

Developed by Audiology Heads of Service and supported by ASSAG

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Foreword

Welcome to the Audiology in Wales Quality Strategy and Framework for Delivery.

It gives me great pleasure to support this document, written by NHS audiology service leads (AHoS) and supported by the Audiology Standing Specialist Advisory Group (ASSAG) of the Welsh Health Scientific Committee, setting out the Quality Strategy and Framework for Delivery for NHS Audiology Services in Wales.

This document brings together the aspirations and vision of the audiology community, aligned to The Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance 2023 and Health and Care Quality Standards 2023 and the quality domains of safe, timely, effective, equitable and person-centred care.

I am pleased to see reference to the important enablers of quality and the audiology community's commitment in these areas.

This document also provides a clear framework for delivery covering both quality assurance and improvement and building on the well-established and highly regarded Wales Audiology Quality Standards. I am also encouraged to see the service user voice and value-based health care featuring prominently.

This national approach to NHS audiology service quality assurance and improvement sit neatly with our *Future Approach for Audiology Services*, launched in 2025 and further demonstrates the commitment and collaboration of Wales' audiologists and their drive to provide the best services possible for the people of Wales.

Jeremy Miles MS
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care



1 Introduction

“Quality is more than just meeting service standards. It needs to be a system-wide way of working to continuously, reliably and sustainably meet the needs of the population that we serve. A culture of continuous learning and improvement is crucial”.

The Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance 2023 and Health and Care Quality Standards 2023, WG¹

Audiology Services in Wales have been engaged in quality assurance and improvement activities for a number of years. These activities, processes and outcomes are overseen by delivering health boards and the ASSAG and this is now further supported with oversight by Wales national Audiology Board.

This document aims to outline the Quality Strategy and Framework for Delivery for audiology in Wales, setting the direction and bringing together existing systems and defining future commitments and plans that will enable the development of national and local improvement plans and ultimately, the improvement of the audiology services citizens in Wales receive.

It is aligned with Welsh strategic policy¹ and particularly the domains of safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and person-centred care. These quality dimensions provide a framework to assess quality and guide improvement.

There has never been a more important time within audiology, for a focus on Quality in all its domains. Recent national reviews in both Scotland and England, instigated by failings in delivery of safe and effective care, have demonstrated the critical importance of a comprehensive and collaborative approach to quality assurance and improvement.

2 The Vision

NHS Wales health boards audiology services working together across Wales and with Public Health Wales (PHW) and others to develop and deliver world leading audiology services for the benefit of our citizens in Wales. Quality evidenced through robust quality assurance processes and continuous quality improvement informed by audit and other means including the patient and family voice.

3 The Mission Statement

Audiology services in Wales will work together to set up and engage in robust quality assurance and improvement systems across all areas of audiology clinical practice.



4 Quality Enablers

As defined within the Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance¹, there are several Quality Enablers ensuring a system-wide approach to improving quality. NHS Wales Audiology will collaborate to ensure alignment and to maximise the impact of these enablers.

4.1 Leadership

Effective leadership is essential in the development and delivery of high-quality audiology care. The *Consultant Clinical Scientists in NHS Wales*² published in 2022 and developed by the Wales Healthcare Science (HCS) Network, highlights the role of Consultant Clinical Scientist in providing system level leadership as well as clinical and scientific expertise. The *Healthcare Science in NHS Wales - Looking Forward* framework³, outlines the substantial impact of effective HCS leadership on broader healthcare systems. Audiology in Wales are committed to supporting and progressing the actions within the *Looking Forward* Framework and the recommendations within the *Consultant Clinical Scientist* paper. Leaders of audiology in Wales will commit to developing and modelling compassionate leadership by creating compassionate and collective cultures within our teams and by embedding the Compassionate Leadership Principles for health and social care in Wales⁴.

The Four Pillars of Compassionate Leadership:

- Attend – give time and listen with fascination.
- Understand – find out what and why.
- Empathise – care about the other person.
- Help – support / take appropriate action.

4.2 Culture and valuing people

An audiology workforce that is engaged in and committed to delivering high quality is a priority. A culture of quality assurance and improvement as business as usual is integral to achieving this. Audiology in Wales will work together and with others to ensure the training and recruitment of the workforce of the future alongside ensuring the opportunities and support for the development of the existing workforce. This will continue to be considered across the career pathway from Assistant audiologists to Consultant Clinical Scientists.

4.3 Information to knowledge

Access to robust information from a range of performance and quality assurance measures is essential to assure a deeper understanding of the information and translate this into knowledge that can inform service improvement. Electronic audiology patient management and reporting systems need to be maintained and



developed to ensure this can occur. Alignment of pathways, terminology, and reporting tools within, and used with, these systems will improve this information and its impact. Audiology services will work together to develop alignment and a common approach to data management and reporting.

4.4 Learning, Improvement and research

In addition to the examples already stated within this document, related to learning and improvement, audiology in Wales will continue to develop their engagement in clinical research. As a fundamental pillar within the *Looking Forward* Framework and a key domain within the *Good Scientific Practice*⁵ competencies that underpins the role of Health Clinical Scientists, participating in and leading clinical research is a strength. The Wales Audiology Research Network will be supported by the AHoS and ASSAG in its mission and delivery of the *Audiology Wales Research Strategy, 2024*⁶.

4.5 Whole system approach and collaborating with others

Audiology in Wales will endeavour to work with others, including outside organisational boundaries, in the pursuit of improved quality services and robust quality assurance. These opportunities will be actively sought by AHoS and will include:

- Working with other UK nations and professional bodies
- Working with the Third Sector
- Engaging with service users and service user groups

Where specific collaborations are in place there should be written agreement as to the purpose and process of collaboration. These agreements should be underpinned by and include the principles included in Appendix 1.

5 The Framework for Delivery - Audiology Quality Assurance and Improvement Systems in Wales

To achieve the mission, audiology in Wales has developed a Framework for Delivery. This framework below details the commitments and activities to be undertaken.

5.1 Quality Standard

Audiology Wales are committed to continuing compliance with national evidence-based audiology Quality Standards⁷. These have been developed to ensure they align to the quality dimensions defined within Duty of Quality, covering safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and person-centred care. Audit against these standards, using the latest quality audit tool⁸, is mandated by the Welsh Government National Clinical Audit and Outcome Review Plan as a Tier 1 audit. The external audit against national standards will follow the agreed process⁹ and be overseen by ASSAG. The



process includes the development of local improvement plans and a national report identifying themes and opportunities for collaboration.

5.2 Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators within the Quality Standard audit tools, the School Entry Age Hearing Screening Programme and the recommendations of the Paediatric Audiology Quality Assurance Task and Finish Group will be defined for ongoing and more regular review and reporting. Review of audiology service KPIs will be overseen by AHoS annually.

5.3 Peer Review

Peer review features within the Quality Standards. Furthermore, a set of principles for peer review being developed will form the basis of an audiology Wales peer review process. The principles of peer review are objectivity, impartiality and integrity allowing timely and constructive feedback to help shape future practice of our peers.

5.4 Identifying, Managing and Sharing Issues and Risks

Audiology services need to understand the issues and risks that might impact upon the safe delivery and quality of care. Issue and risk identification and management will be undertaken in line with local health board policies and procedures. Additionally, NHS Wales audiology services will share issues and risks through the AHoS to identify any themes or areas of commonality that might benefit from collaboration.

5.5 Clinical Audit

Audiology services will embed clinical audit into their practice in line with health board policies. Where possible audits will be aligned to allow for benchmarking and to improve consistency and robustness of evidence submitted as part of Quality Standards. Each audiology service will develop an annual clinical audit plan that aligns to the evidence required to fulfil Quality Standards or KPI review.

5.6 Service User Voice and learning from Concerns

NHS Wales audiology services will embed service user and other stakeholder engagement within practice in line with Quality Standards and health board policies. A set of core questions will be included in locally used patient reported experience measures and responses will be evaluated quarterly across Wales. Other service user engagement activities will be undertaken locally dependent on local service needs and key themes will be shared across Wales to identify any common ideas for collaboration and improvement. Similarly, systems for monitoring and responding to service user concerns will be in place locally as defined by local health board policy. Relevant concerns will be shared, and any themes identified to further inform collaboration and improvement across Wales.



5.7 Outcomes and Value Based Health Care

Audiology services will utilise patient-reported outcome measures (PROM) and patient-reported experience measures (PREM) to assess the effectiveness of management and interventions. While these measures may differ across specific condition pathways and health boards, audiology in Wales will strive to standardise PROMs and PREMs where possible. A Value-Based healthcare approach will guide service delivery and development, ensuring healthcare costs are considered throughout. This approach will also include the consideration of transformational changes, with audiology services and healthcare scientists in audiology implementing new and innovative roles and service delivery models.

5.8 Quality Improvement

NHS Wales Audiology services will work together to improve quality through sharing good practice and local service improvement activities and outcomes as well as developing a Wales-wide quality improvement plan bringing together the recommendations and actions from the national quality standard reports. The national audiology improvement action plan will be overseen by ASSAG. Audiology in Wales will also ensure they look to learn from others, taking opportunities to review any recommendations made in relation to audiology services outside of Wales, including other UK nations reviews.

5.9 Sharing and Learning Events

A national audiology conference will be organised annually to share good practice and enable learning. The event will be organised by health board audiology teams on a rotational basis (North Wales, South-East Wales, South-West Wales). The programme will showcase the innovation and improvements undertaken by audiology in Wales with the aim of sharing good practice and supporting a once for Wales approach. The conference programme will seek to consider the work of audiology in the other UK nations and other areas outside of Wales and other clinical disciplines to ensure audiology are learning from the successes of others.

There is also a commitment to the organisation and engagement in more focussed sharing and learning events related to specific areas of clinical practice and quality. These include: an annual multidisciplinary event focussed on national review of implantable device services; an event focussed on paediatric audiology quality indicators; and national events focussed on specific quality standard audit outcomes. Audiology services also participate in PHW training days for individuals involved in newborn diagnostic hearing assessment which have a significant focus on quality outcomes and learning.



6 Reporting and Accountability Structure

Audiology Services in Wales are managed and delivered within all health boards with newborn hearing screening delivered by PHW. The non-statutory AHoS Group has met for over 20 years and provides a highly effective forum for collaboration across Wales. ASSAG is a subgroup of the WHSC (statutory) to Welsh Government and has had a long-standing role in the oversight of audiology Quality Standards. Both the AHoS and ASSAG have contributed to the development of this document and will be actively involved in its review and oversight of the actions outlined within. This will now be further supported by the Audiology Board. ASSAG will also provide the means for escalation of issues to WHSC, and Welsh Government if required. This document will be reviewed and updated 3 yearly or earlier if identified as necessary.

7 References

- ¹ [Duty of Quality Statutory Guidance \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales) WG, 2023
- ² [Consultant Clinical Scientists in NHS Wales](#), HCS Network, May 2022
- ³ [Healthcare Science in NHS Wales Looking Forward](#), NHS Wales, 2018
- ⁴ Compassionate leadership [Compassionate Leadership Principles - Gwella HEIW Leadership Portal for Wales](#). HEIW, 2024
- ⁵ [AHCS-Good-Scientific-Practice-2021.pdf \(hee.nhs.uk\)](#), AHCS, 2021
- ⁶ Audiology Wales Research Strategy, ASSAG, 2024 (add link when available)
- ⁷ Audiology Quality Standards (add link to update Wales QS doc when available)
- ⁸ Audiology Quality Standards audit tools, ASSAG
- ⁹ Audiology Quality Standards Process (add link to updated doc when available)



Appendix 1

Principles of Collaboration between the participating countries - relevant to all formal combined professional work

1. Appropriate representation: collaborations between the participating countries will feature representatives from each of the participating UK countries, nominated by their respective AHoS Group and with the opportunity for equal representation from the countries.
2. Sharing of effort and support: Where representatives from one country take a lead on development work, this will require agreement with representatives from the other countries and be acknowledged.
3. Effective representation: It is the responsibility of country representatives to ensure effective two-way communication with colleagues and other stakeholders in their own country relating to the work of the Group.
4. Acknowledgement of collaboration: The multi-country collaborative approach will be acknowledged in communications relating to the Group and any products of the collaboration presented nationally or in the public domain.
5. Unified and Positive Presentation & resolving issues: There are benefits to all though positive presentation of collaborative work. Issues relating to working of the collaborative approach will be shared and resolved within the Group.
6. Clarity of Purpose: for each distinct collaboration there should be a document that defines the scope, objectives, deliverables and timescales, to be initially agreed by the respective AHoS Group on commencement of the stream of work.