

Checking for hearing loss and next steps

Make sure you know how to recognise the signs of hearing loss, carry out hearing checks, and take the appropriate action.

Recognising hearing loss

Age-related hearing loss can often go unnoticed for some time, as its signs can be misunderstood. For example, if a resident is unresponsive or confused, this may be identified as a sign of dementia or a mental health condition, rather than hearing loss.

Do any of your residents:

- complain about others mumbling?
- need to have things repeated several times?
- say they cannot hear as well as they used to?
- fail to react when you're speaking to them?
- have the TV or radio on very loud?
- fail to follow conversation in noisy places?
- appear to be more withdrawn or have changed their behaviour?
- no longer take part in conversation and activities?

If yes, they may have undiagnosed hearing loss.

If you suspect that a resident is struggling to hear, discuss it with them and ask to check their hearing. It could be that they haven't recognised it themselves, or they may be unaware of the easy steps to take to get hearing loss diagnosed and treated.

Checking for hearing loss

You can screen residents for hearing loss quickly and easily using either the Action on Hearing Loss Hearing Check or the Siemens HearCheck Screener.

Action on Hearing Loss Hearing Check

This quick, simple check can be done over the phone or online. It's not a full hearing assessment, but it can indicate whether someone has hearing loss and if they should see their GP for further tests.

Call **0844 800 3838**

(call charges apply) or visit

actiononhearingloss.org.uk/hearingcheck

Please note that the Hearing Check does not pick up conductive hearing loss, which is caused by a blockage or problem in the outer or middle ear preventing sound waves from reaching the inner ear.

The Hearing Check only picks up hearing loss caused by damage to the sound-sensing cells in the inner ear, such as age-related hearing loss.

Siemens HearCheck Screener

This is a handheld device that screens for hearing loss to identify if a full audiology assessment is required. It is a fast, accurate and simple method of screening for hearing loss – no special training is needed.

What next?

If any form of screening identifies hearing loss, or if you suspect hearing loss but the resident is unable to have a hearing check, contact the resident's GP.

The GP will check the resident's ears for any temporary cause of hearing loss, such as an ear-wax blockage.

If a temporary cause isn't found, the GP should refer the individual to the audiology or ear, nose and throat (ENT) department of the local hospital for a full hearing assessment.

Make sure you record that the resident has suspected or diagnosed hearing loss in their notes and/or care plan.

You can also assist the resident, or their family member, to complete a **How to support me with hearing loss** form. If a resident has suspected hearing loss, always contact their GP.

Other things to check:

- Are all relevant staff members aware of the resident's hearing loss?
- Do staff follow the communication tips in the information sheet ***Communicating well with residents who have hearing loss?***
- Is assistive equipment, such as a conversation listener, available for the resident to use?

Questions about hearing loss or tinnitus?

Contact the free Action on Hearing Loss Information Line:

Telephone: **0808 808 0123** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

SMS: **0780 000 0360** (standard text message rates apply)

Email: **information@hearingloss.org.uk**

You can also visit the Action on Hearing Loss website for information and support: **actiononhearingloss.org.uk**

