

## AIM

- To use digital technology in a community pharmacy setting to improve the patient pathway for hearing health (digital otoscopy, hearing screening & ear wax microsuction).
- To bring care closer to patients' homes.
- To improve patient outcomes and reduce pressure in primary care & secondary care ENT and audiology services.
- To upskill and utilise community pharmacy staff to deliver a novel service.

## BACKGROUND

A cause effect analysis recognised the lack of universally accessible NHS ear-wax removal in SWL. By joint working with the HIN, SWL OP board and the ENT clinical network, the pilot was funded to help redirect patients away from primary and secondary care to community pharmacy. Stakeholder cross-collaboration led to the launch of the 12 month pilot in September 2022 across 20 pharmacies in Merton, Wandsworth & Richmond.

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

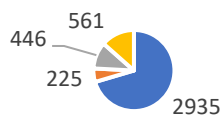


## METHODS

- **Lean QI methodology**-used to develop this novel service across SWL. Mapping of pre-existing hearing pathways reflected an inefficient use of GP and consultant resource.
- **Improved flow**-community pharmacy and the “Remote Review” functionality for Advice & Guidance, has improved flow by reducing waiting times (from 20 weeks in secondary care to 4-5 weeks in this pilot) promoting earlier diagnosis and management.
- **Electronic referral pathway development**-seamless working across boundaries, with clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, improving the referral process and therefore reserving secondary care appointments for patients who require more complex input.
- **Data collection**-robust activity, referral & performance data.
- **Patient and stakeholder feedback**-patient surveys, focus groups and contemporaneous response to feedback.

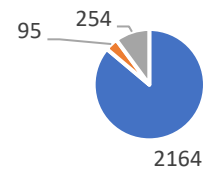
## RESULTS

Referral data (up to and including 21/05/2023) TOTAL no of referrals=4580



- Completed pathways
- Awaiting pharmacy to accept referral
- Awaiting pharmacy appointment
- Dropped/DNA

Outcome data (up to and including 21/05/2023)



- Patient discharged, no further action required
- Referral to ENT
- Referral to audiology

- Up to and including 21/05/2023, 4580 referrals have been made to THHP and 2935 patients have been seen.
- 74% of patients discharged without needing no input required from primary or secondary care.
- 2634 otoscopies, 2634 ear wax microsuctions, 548 hearing screens (252 of which have been abnormal) have been performed by community pharmacy staff.
- 25 clinical red flags have been detected through the service.

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital technology in community pharmacy has enhanced patient hearing care. Extension of the pilot to allow time for evaluation and for the service to develop further across SWL is recommended. Referral protocols directly from secondary care into the pathway are also in development.