

## Healthwatch City of London: Patient Journey

A City resident has shared their journey with how they experienced their care from NHS services and the barriers and hurdles they faced throughout.

In 2010, the resident felt extremely ill with a painful headache, they called their local GP Practice to organise an appointment however due to a lack of availability, they were unable to book an appointment. They walked in to the Royal London walk-in clinic with a severe headache and feeling very ill, they were triaged for a sinus infection. They waited in the observation ward with a range of tests to be done to understand what the course of illness could be.

They had a positive experience at the Royal London walk in clinic, however received results that they had contracted shingles, which had impacted the optic nerve in their head; they were then prescribed an anti-viral medication, which, however, was not effective. She was told to phone an ambulance if she had any severe pain from then on.

The resident later got severe head pain, which was the exact same pain as previously felt, along with a hissing sound in her ear with feelings of a lack of stability and balance. After a fall in public, she was advised to go to the GP with a suspected benign ear tumour (acoustic neuroma). Their GP, sent them to the London Independent Hospital, for a hearing test appointment. Although this is a private hospital, the initial appointment was NHS funded.

The result of the test was that high frequency hearing loss was diagnosed. They went back to their GP, with their GP advising for hearing aids. Although the patient had initial concerns surrounding if they really needed hearing aids for their current hearing loss, it was heavily recommended by their GP, 'It's the best thing you can do'. They received their hearing aid care at the Royal London Hospital, with an initial hearing aid fitting, yet once they received their first pair of hearing aids, they didn't fit correctly. The patient felt like they were not being listened to by their hearing aid specialist, as her concerns about the lack of proper fitting was not taken into consideration.

Once the patient was diagnosed with partial deafness, they met with a counsellor from the Royal London Hospital who was able to walk the patient through her diagnosis and provide support. Both emotional support as well as able to safeguard them to the right place to if they need extra support. This City residents patient journey highlights the importance of available GP appointments, improvements, and effective communication between, especially for those with pre-existing conditions.

*'At least I know what I'm up against'*

Our resident also stressed the importance of induction loops in all appointments rooms and buildings in primary and secondary care, such as GP Practices and hospitals, as well as the importance of privacy and confidentiality in clinics. Many privacy issues can occur in reception rooms where there may not necessarily be the space for private conversations and services need to be aware of these issues in order to make appropriate changes.

**If you have faced any similar health issues or are looking for more information on where you can access care, down below we have listed some important information.**

### Shingles

It is important if you are turning 65, those aged between 70 and 79 and for people who are aged 50 with a weakened immune system to receive your shingles vaccination.

Shingles is a common condition that causes a painful rash. It can sometimes lead to serious problems such as long-lasting pain, hearing loss or blindness. You're more likely to get shingles, and it's more likely to cause serious problems, as you get older or if you have a severely weakened immune system.

The shingles vaccine helps to reduce your chances of getting shingles and to reduce your chances of getting serious problems if you do get shingles. If you are not in the age bracket for your shingles vaccination, you should speak to your GP to see if you are able to access it early.

For more information on the shingles vaccination visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/shingles-vaccine/>

## **Deaf awareness**

### How to get help

You should visit your GP if you have problems with your hearing. It could be caused by something that can be easily treated such as an ear infection or a perforated ear drum. However, if you are experiencing problems with hearing more permanently, one option may be a hearing aid. These are available free on the NHS (more expensive options are available privately), you will need to visit your GP who can refer you to a hearing specialist. The specialist will then be able to conduct an assessment to see whether a hearing aid is an appropriate action to take and will explain the different kinds of hearing aids and which one is best for your condition and lifestyle.

There are many types of hearing aids, more information is available on the NHS website Hearing aids and implants - NHS ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))

### Support available

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People is the National Charity who support people who are deaf, have hearing loss or tinnitus.

They hold monthly session at the Neaman Practice that offers the following services:

- New batteries and ear mould retubing
- Advice and support on how to clean and maintain your hearing aids
- Information on hearing loss
- Signposting to other services

The sessions are held the third Wednesday of the month between 2pm - 4pm.

To book email [sharon.james@rnid.org.uk](mailto:sharon.james@rnid.org.uk) or Text or WhatsApp 07551 063742 or Phone 020 3227 6044.

## **Walk in clinic**

It is important to note that there is no longer a walk-in clinic at the Royal London Hospital. If you need to access a walk-in clinic, please visit St Bartholomew's Hospital, Minor Injuries Clinic.

St Bartholomew's is open from Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm. It is located in Kenton and Lucas block of the hospital. Please note the minor injuries unit is closed on bank holidays. The minor injuries unit at St Bartholomew's will be closed from Thursday 27 June 2024 and will reopen on Tuesday 2 July 2024.

For more information on deaf awareness visit:

<https://www.healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk/report/2024-02-01/healthwatch-city-london-deaf-awareness-patient-panel>