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AUDIOLOGY NOISE EXPOSURE GUIDELINE

This guidance does not override the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decision according to the circumstances of the individual patient in consultation with the patient and /or carer. Health care professionals must be prepared to justify any deviation from this guidance.

Introduction

This Guideline applies to all Audiology Staff who carry out Real Ear Measurements (REM), Freefield Calibration, Freefield Testing and any other Audiology procedures involving Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A). This Guideline is based on current published guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the control of noise at work regulations.

This guideline applies to any Audiology procedure that involves noise exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A), These Audiology procedures need to be carried out in a Safe manner to minimise any risks to the safety of themselves of others from Noise Exposure.

This Guideline is in place to ensure and demonstrate that Noise Exposure Safety is upheld and maintained across all sites.

This document and guidance does not override the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decisions according to the circumstances. Health care professionals must be prepared to justify any deviation from this guidance

Lead Clinician(s)
Joanne MJ Stanley

Senior Clinical Audiologist

Edward Southan

Countywide Audiology Manager

Approved by Audiology Governance Meeting on:

21st July 2026

Approved by Medicines Safety Committee on:
Where medicines are included in document.

N/A

Review Date:

21st July 2029

This is the most current document and should be used until a revised version is in place

Key amendments to this guideline

Date	Amendment	Approved by:

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Please Note:

This guidance does not override the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decision according to the circumstances of the individual patient in consultation with the patient and /or carer. Health care professionals must be prepared to justify any deviation from this guidance.

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1. Introduction

This document is designed to support Audiology professionals in their work. It should be used in conjunction with clinical judgement to attain optimal safety and optimal outcomes for our service users.

It applies to the Audiology Service of Worcester Acute NHS Trust across all Audiology sites.

This Guideline applies to all Audiology Staff who carry out Real Ear Measurements (REM), Freefield Calibration, Freefield Testing and any other Audiology procedures involving Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A). This Guideline is based on current published guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the control of noise at work regulations.

This guideline applies to any Audiology procedure that involves noise exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A). These Audiology procedures need to be carried out in a Safe manner to minimise any risks to the safety of themselves or others from Noise Exposure. This Guideline is in place to ensure and demonstrate that Noise Exposure Safety is upheld and maintained across all sites.

This document and guidance does not override the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decisions according to the circumstances. Health care professionals must be prepared to justify any deviation from this guidance.

Benefits of following the Guideline include:

- To help maximise Health and Safety and to minimise risks from Noise Exposure
- To help assure the same safety standards across all sites
- To help ensure good practice
- To provide a learning tool to staff
- To identify areas for improvement
- To identify any training needs
- To contribute to the audit process

2. Definitions

Real Ear Measurements (REM), Freefield Calibration, Freefield Testing and other Audiology procedures may involve Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A).

Some Equipment is capable of exceeding 85dB(A) but this level must not be exceeded.

This guideline applies to any Audiology task that involves noise exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A).

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3. Responsibility and Duties

It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff who carry out Real Ear Measurements (REM), Freefield Calibration, Freefield Testing and any other Audiology procedure involving Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A), to ensure these Audiology procedures are carried out in a Safe manner to minimise any risks to the safety of themselves or others from Noise Exposure.

It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff to consider using appropriate Ear Defenders, as supplied by the Audiology Department, as Noise protection when performing any Audiology procedure involving Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A), to ensure these Audiology procedures are carried out in a Safe manner to minimise any risks to the safety of themselves or others from Noise Exposure. Whilst this is not mandatory it is considered a sensible precaution.

It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff to discuss with and offer the optional use of appropriate Ear Defenders, as supplied by the Audiology Department, as Noise protection to service users, where appropriate, and their companions. This applies when in any Audiology environment involving Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A), to ensure these Audiology procedures are carried out in a Safe manner to minimise any risks to the safety of themselves or others from Noise Exposure. Whilst this is not mandatory, it is to be explained to service users, where appropriate, and their companions, that it is considered a sensible precaution.

It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff who are exposed to Noise levels equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A) to report any concerns and to request any training needs required regarding Noise Exposure Safety.

It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff to perform Daily Calibration on Audiometers and Freefield equipment, including checking specified dB(A) levels.

It is the responsibility of all Audiology Staff to use a Sound Level Meter to check dB(A) levels where there is any concern or query regarding dB(A) levels.

It is the responsibility of all Audiology staff to report any safety concerns or faults with any Audiology Equipment and Noise Levels immediately via email to the appropriate band 7 and Countywide Audiology Services Manager.

It is the responsibility of all Audiology staff to ensure that equipment reported as faulty is removed from service and is not in use until appropriately repaired or replaced.

It is the responsibility of all Audiology staff, where the Audiology Equipment has the ability to exceed 85dB(A), for example Freefield calibration, – Not to exceed 80dB(A).

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It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff to maintain all infection control requirements relating to Audiology Equipment and Audiology Safety Equipment, including Ear Defenders.

This Guideline is in place to ensure and demonstrate that Noise Exposure Safety is upheld and maintained across all sites.

This document and guidance does not override the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decisions according to the circumstances. Health care professionals must be prepared to justify any deviation from this guidance.

It is the responsibility of the Audiology Department to ensure the availability of safety Equipment –

- Ear Defenders that comply to BS EN 352-1 these are available for use by Audiology Staff, Service users and their companions
- Alternative Ear Protection for Audiology Staff - where above provision is not suitable for an individual staff member on a case by case basis.
- Sound Level Meter calibrated annually

It is the responsibility of the Countywide Audiology Manager and Worcestershire Acute NHS Trust Technical Services Team to ensure that Audiology equipment is maintained and calibrated annually as required, by an appropriate calibration service.

4. Guideline detail

When performing Real Ear Measurements (REM), Freefield Calibration and Freefield Testing there are times where these procedures involve Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A), this guideline applies in these situations and in any situation or other Audiology procedure where this level of dB(A) applies.

Based on current published guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), under the control of noise at work regulations, where Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A) the Lower Action Value applies.

Under the Lower Action Value the Mandatory Employer Action required is –

- To assess risks
- Provide training
- Make hearing protection optional

Within Audiology

- Risks have been assessed and is included on the Workplace Risk Assessment Audiology 2025.
- All Staff who perform REM, Freefield Calibration and Freefield Testing are trained to do so and are able to use sound level meters.
- Staff can ask for further training assistance if required.
- As an Audiology Department Hearing Preservation is a consideration and as a result hearing protection is provided across all sites for the use of Staff and Service Users or their companions as and when required. The use of the

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It is the responsibility of every individual to ensure this is the latest version as published on the Trust Intranet hearing protection where Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A) is optional.

It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff when performing Real Ear Measurements (REM), Freefield Calibration, Freefield Testing and any other Audiology procedure that involves Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A), to do so in a Safe manner to minimise any risks to the safety of themselves or others by.....

Ensuring -

- They read this Guideline
- They calibrate and check equipment for faults on every day the equipment is in use
- They report any issues immediately via email to the appropriate band 7 and Countywide Audiology Services Manager.
- They proceed safely and with caution at this dB(A) level
- They do not exceed 85dB(A)
- They have appropriate ear defenders available
- When this dB(A) level is reached ear defenders are optional and Audiology Staff should use clinical judgement and individual preference regarding the use of ear defenders
- When this dB(A) level is reached Audiology Staff should offer the optional use of ear defenders to service users, where appropriate, and their companions
- Infection Control should be maintained including regarding the ear defenders

Infection Control Requirements –

It is the responsibility and duty of all Audiology Staff who have available and use, either for Audiology Staff, Service Users or their Companions, the optional ear defenders to ensure they maintain all infection control requirements by.....

- Cleaning ear defenders before and after each use in the same way as other Audiometer accessories are cleaned, for example the Air Conduction Headphones, Bone Conduction Headband and Response Button.
- Ensuring hand hygiene before and after use of ear defenders

The Audiology Department will ensure –

- Ear Defenders that comply to BS EN 352-1 are available for use by Audiology Staff, Service users and their companions
- Alternative Ear Protection options for Audiology Staff are available - where above provision is not suitable for an individual staff member on a case by case basis.
- Availability of a Sound Level Meter calibrated annually

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New Clinical Starters –

Any New Clinical Staff Starters who will be performing Real Ear Measurements (REM), Freefield Calibration, Freefield Testing and any other Audiology procedure that involve Noise Exposure equal to or in excess of 80dB(A) but less than 85dB(A), will read this guideline along with other Audiology Documents and Guidelines as part of their induction process. The new Starter will be required to confirm that they have read this document via email.

5. Implementation

5.1 Plan for Implementation

This Guideline will be implemented as soon as it has been approved by the Audiology Governance Team and disseminated to all appropriate Audiology Staff.

5.2 Dissemination

As soon as this Guideline has been approved by the Audiology Governance Team it will be –

- saved into the Audiology Shared Drive
- emailed to all appropriate Audiology Staff
- added to the Audiology Document Read Compliance sheet for appropriate staff
- added to Worcestershire Acute NHS Trust key documents Audiology web page
- discussed at Countywide Audiology meetings or most appropriate equivalent meeting

5.3 Training and Awareness

Any training needs will be identified by individual Audiology staff and their Line Manager, appropriate training will then be discussed and provided as required.

6. Monitoring and Compliance

Page/ Section of Key Document	Key control:	Checks to be carried out to confirm compliance with the Policy:	How often the check will be carried out:	Responsible for carrying out the check:	Results of check reported to: (Responsible for also ensuring actions are developed to address any areas of non-compliance)	Frequency of reporting:
	WHAT?	HOW?	WHEN?	WHO?	WHERE?	WHEN?
All	Appropriate safety equipment will be available on each site Including – Ear Defenders and Sound Level Meters	New safety equipment that complies to appropriate standard will be ordered and made available.	Annually	Named individual carrying out the safety equipment ordering and maintenance and overall responsibility is the Countywide Audiology Manager.	Named individual will carry out the safety equipment ordering and maintenance and report results and findings to the Countywide Audiology Manager	Annually
All	All staff will be made aware of this Guideline	All current Clinical Staff and New Clinical Staff will be asked to read this Guideline and to email to confirm that this has been read and a record will be saved in their personal file.	Once Guideline has been approved and or when New Clinical Staff start work within the trust and when Guideline is updated.	Named individual monitoring compliance of read documents and overall responsibility is the Countywide Audiology Manager.	Named individual will monitor compliance of read documents and will report to the Countywide Audiology Manager	Annually

7. Guideline Review

Countywide Audiology Guidelines will be reviewed every 3 years by the document author, where appropriate, or another designated member of Audiology Staff.

Overall responsibility for ensuring Review is undertaken is the responsibility of the Countywide Audiology Manager.

8. References

Government website – Health and Safety Executive - HSE Document – Control of Noise at Work Regulations

Good Practice

9. Appendices

None

10. Approval Process

This Guideline is submitted to the Audiology Governance Team for approval, and Guideline Approval will be included in the relevant Audiology Governance Meeting minutes.

11. Version Control

On each occasion where this Guideline is Reviewed – any key amendments will be included in the table below and Guideline Version Number will be updated on the Guideline.

Key Amendments to this Document

Date	Amendment	Approved by:

12. Equality Requirements – Equality Impact Assessment Form

Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (EHIA) Tool

Herefordshire & Worcestershire STP - Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (HEIA) Form

Please read HEIA guidelines when completing this form

Section 1 - Name of Organisation (please tick)

Herefordshire & Worcestershire STP		Herefordshire Council		Herefordshire CCG	
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	✓	Worcestershire County Council		Worcestershire CCGs	
Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust		Wye Valley NHS Trust		Other (please state)	

Name of Lead for Activity	Edward Southan / Joanne MJ Stanley
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Details of individuals completing this assessment	Name	Job title	e-mail contact
	Edward Southan	Countywide Audiology Manager	edward.southan@nhs.net
	Joanne Stanley	Senior Clinical Audiologist	joanne.stanley2@nhs.net
Date assessment completed	June 2026		

Section 2

Activity being assessed (e.g. policy/procedure, document, service redesign, policy, strategy etc.)	Title: Audiology Noise Exposure Guideline			
What is the aim, purpose and/or intended outcomes of this Activity?	To improve the Health and Safety and minimise risks when undertaking Audiology procedures involving Noise Exposure			
Who will be affected by the development & implementation of this activity?	☐ Service User ☒ Patient ☒ Carers ☐ Visitors	☒ Staff ☐ Communities ☒ Other _____		
Is this:	☐ Review of an existing activity ☒ New activity ☐ Planning to withdraw or reduce a service, activity or presence?			
What information and evidence have you reviewed to help inform this assessment? (Please name sources, eg demographic	Current process reviewed, Government website – Health and Safety Executive - HSE Document - Control of Noise at Work Regulations considered, Current Noise Exposure Levels reviewed, Health and Safety Equipment Sourced.			

information for patients / services / staff groups affected, complaints etc.	
Summary of engagement or consultation undertaken (e.g. who and how have you engaged with, or why do you believe this is not required)	Consultation with Countywide Audiology Manager and Countywide Audiology team.
Summary of relevant findings	Implementing this is a necessary step to ensure and demonstrate Safe Noise Exposure within Audiology.

Section 3

Please consider the potential impact of this activity (during development & implementation) on each of the equality groups outlined below. **Please tick one or more impact box below for each Equality Group and explain your rationale.** Please note it is possible for the potential impact to be both positive and negative within the same equality group and this should be recorded. Remember to consider the impact on e.g. staff, public, patients, carers etc. in these equality groups.

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Please explain your reasons for any potential positive, neutral or negative impact identified
Age	X	X	X	Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity. However, Age, for example younger children with smaller head size, may impact on the use of Ear Defenders, however, at the volume levels involved, Ear Defenders are optional.
Disability	X	X	X	Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity. However, some disabilities may impact on the use of Ear Defenders, however, at the volume levels involved, Ear Defenders are optional.
Gender Reassignment	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Pregnancy & Maternity	X	X	X	Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity. However -

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Please explain your reasons for any potential positive, neutral or negative impact identified
				Any Pregnant staff, or anyone present who is pregnant, within the Noise Exposure environment will need to discuss any potential risks of this activity with their Medical professional and / or Occupational Health. Implementing the guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Race including Traveling Communities	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Religion & Belief	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Sex	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Sexual Orientation	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Other Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups (e.g. carers; care leavers; homeless; Social/Economic deprivation, travelling communities etc.)	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.
Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from the unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions within societies)	X	X		Audiology Procedures involving Noise Exposure are performed regardless of this Equality Group. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.

Section 4

What actions will you take to mitigate any potential negative impacts?	Risk identified	Actions required to reduce / eliminate	Who will lead on the action?	Timeframe
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		negative impact		
	Potential Negative impacts may apply to Age, for example younger children with smaller head size, which may impact on the use of Ear Defenders.	Use of Ear Defenders at the Noise levels involved are optional. The noise level can be limited to a lower level. Anyone not required to be present for the Noise Exposure part of the procedure can step out of the environment for this procedure only. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.	The Audiology staff who are leading / carrying out the Noise Exposure Procedure are responsible for discussing potential negative impacts with anyone present in the Noise Exposure environment and taking the lead in this environment.	As required
	Potential Negative impacts may apply to Disabilities which may impact on the use of Ear Defenders.	Use of Ear Defenders at the Noise levels involved are optional. The noise level can be limited to a lower level. Anyone not required to be present for the Noise Exposure part of the procedure can step out of the environment for this procedure only. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.	The Audiology staff who are leading / carrying out the Noise Exposure Procedure are responsible for discussing potential negative impacts with anyone present in the Noise Exposure environment and taking the lead in this environment.	As Required

	Potential Negative impacts may apply to and any Pregnant staff, or anyone present who is pregnant, within the Noise Exposure environment.	Use of Ear Defenders at the Noise levels involved are optional. The noise level can be limited to a lower level. Anyone not required to be present for the Noise Exposure part of the procedure can step out of the environment for this procedure only. Any Pregnant staff, or anyone present who is pregnant, within the Noise Exposure environment will need to discuss any potential risks of this activity with their Medical professional and / or Occupational Health. Implementing this guideline will hopefully contribute to greater Safety of this activity.	The Audiology staff who are leading / carrying out the Noise Exposure Procedure are responsible for discussing potential negative impacts with anyone present in the Noise Exposure environment and taking the lead in this environment. Any Pregnant staff, or anyone present who is pregnant, within the Noise Exposure environment will need to discuss any potential risks of this activity with their Medical professional and / or Occupational Health.	As Required
How will you monitor these actions?	Any changes in service provision is monitored by the Countywide Audiology Manager			
When will you review this EIA? (e.g in a service redesign, this EIA should be revisited regularly throughout the design & implementation)	Annually			

Section 5 - Please read and agree to the following Equality Statement

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1. Equality Statement

1.1. All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to set out arrangements to assess and consult on how their policies and functions impact on the 9 protected characteristics: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage & Civil Partnership; Pregnancy & Maternity; Race; Religion & Belief; Sex; Sexual Orientation

1.2. Our Organisations will challenge discrimination, promote equality, respect human rights, and aims to design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our service, and population, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.

1.3. All staff are expected to deliver services and provide services and care in a manner which respects the individuality of service users, patients, carer's etc, and as such treat them and members of the workforce respectfully, paying due regard to the 9 protected characteristics.

Name of person completing EIA	Joanne MJ Stanley
Date signed	June 2026
Comments:	
Name of the Countywide Audiology Manager who is the Lead Person for this activity	Edward Southan
Date signed	June 2026
Comments:	



13. Financial Impact Assessment

To be completed by the key document author and included when the document is submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

ID	Financial Impact:	Yes/No
1.	Does the implementation of this document require any additional Capital resources	No
2.	Does the implementation of this document require additional revenue	No
3.	Does the implementation of this document require additional manpower	No
4.	Does the implementation of this document release any manpower costs through a change in practice	No
5.	Are there additional staff training costs associated with implementing this document which cannot be delivered through current training programmes or allocated training times for staff	No
Other comments:		
None		