

Five themes emerged from the interviews with older people about hearing loss and auditory services:

- Adapting to hearing loss;
- Gathering information;
- Living with hearing loss;
- Accessing services;
- Using personal experience.



Queen Margaret University
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Involving Older People Research Programme:

The use and misuse of Auditory profiles

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Older people often report listening difficulties in everyday situations. However, despite the recent modernisation of hearing aid services there is significant evidence that older adults will often delay seeking help from Audiology services.

Our study had two aims:

- 1) Firstly we were interested in trying to determine what barriers and obstacles exist that may prevent older people from accessing Audiology services; specifically we were also interested in what makes them decide to seek help.
- 2) Secondly, we asked whether standard hearing tests really “capture” the real world experience of the older adult? Are there other tests that we could use that would be more beneficial to older adults?

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Implementation

In the first part of the study, 10 older people (aged 50+) took part in a one hour recorded interview. The purpose of the interview was to discuss the individual's experience of hearing problems and to explore possible reasons for not seeking help. All participants reported some difficulty communicating in everyday situations, but had not been assessed for or fitted with a hearing aid.

In the second part of the study a full hearing assessment was carried out. The assessment consisted of a series of conventional hearing tests and other listening tasks that are not routinely used but may offer an insight into the real world experience. Each participant was given a report detailing the results of the assessment.. After the hearing assessment was completed participants were invited to attend for a further recorded interview in which they could discuss their feelings about the results of the assessment and whether the assessment had affected how they felt about their hearing. Five participants agreed to come back for follow up interviews. A focus group was also planned for December but due to unforeseen difficulties this focus group had to be rescheduled to early March.

The information gathered from the interviews and assessments was then analysed.

Findings

- All participants had permanent hearing losses of varying severity in at least one ear (9/10 cases had a hearing loss in both ears)
- One of the tests used in the assessment, the Random Gap Detection Tests, yielded results that could not be predicted from Pure Tone Audiometry results. Pure Tone Audiometry is the standard test used in audiological profiles.
- Five themes emerged from the interviews
 - Adapting to hearing loss
 - Gathering information
 - Living with hearing loss
 - Accessing services
 - Using personal experience