

27 June 2016,

GP Liaison Officer

Dear GP's

I am writing to advise that at the present time the Tauranga DHB is unable to provide a Diagnostic Adult hearing test service to new patients. The number of referrals being received into our department is far outweighing our capacity to see new patients and a tightening within the service needs to be made to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our existing patients. At present new patients can be waiting up to 8 months to be seen for a hearing test.

We acknowledge that this is not an ideal scenario, and hope that in the near future we will be able to provide this service again.

Some of the local private audiology clinics have advised that they will complete Adult Diagnostic Hearing tests for free, where as other clinics have advised they will complete the tests at a reduced rate. Most clinics offer free screenings, however a screening test most likely will not meet standards required by ENT services, if there is any possibility that your patient will need to be referred onto them. Some people will be able to apply to WINZ for funding towards the cost of a hearing test.

Referrals that are received for Children over the age of 4 are being sent, in the first instance, to the Vision Hearing Technicians and Public Ear Nurses for an initial screening test; if they diagnose an issue then they are re-referring them directly back into the DHB. An effort is made to see these patients within a month of being re-referred back to us.

I would like to clarify which patients/referrals are currently being accepted to be seen at Tauranga DHB:

- Diagnostic hearing tests for all age groups that are requested from other DHB services, such as ENT services, oncology, and paediatrics.
- Babies referred through the NBHS service. (Requirement from MoH).
- Children under 4, for diagnostic hearing tests.

- Other children, who require 2 clinicians to test them due to their complex needs.
- Children with hearing aids.
- Adults with dual disabilities/complex needs that cannot be seen in the community for diagnostic hearing tests. This includes adults that require 2 clinicians to test them and those with very low functioning IQ's.
- There is also a very limited adult hearing aid service. Again this has been limited to those adults that cannot be seen in the community setting, such as those with special needs and/or complex needs.

This proposed change is effective immediately. If you wish to contact me regarding the content of this letter, please do so either through your GP Liaison or via email to [shari.ball@bopdhb.govt.nz](mailto:shari.ball@bopdhb.govt.nz).

Yours Sincerely,

Shari Ball  
Team Leader  
Audiology