

Media release

**Audiology team adapt support to ensure patients stay safe at home**

**23 April 2020**

Feeling isolated and anxious during lockdown? Now imagine you have a hearing impairment. Relying on a hearing aid is tough enough as it is but what if you run into trouble with your device, what do you do if you can't nip out for a face to face appointment with your audiologist?

Determined to provide their patients with all the care they need, First Community Health and Care Audiology Service in Surrey Heartlands have risen to the challenge. Their team of 12, which includes seven audiologists, two assistants and three administrators, are all usually based in hospitals or clinics in East Surrey. Although used to providing face to face appointments, they now find themselves having to adjust to home working and relying on telephone and email to communicate with patients who are living in the community.

Undefeated by technical issues and anything else the current situation throws at them, this tight knit team are adapting to new ways of working. Adopting new approaches, means that they are successfully assisting patients and helping them avoid any unnecessary risks connected with leaving the safety of their own home. Many of their patients are over 70 and some are feeling anxious and isolated. By taking a positive and proactive approach, the audiology team are managing to meet their patients' needs, including:

- Taking patient histories for their hearing assessment /re-assessment appointment
- Discussing issues with hearing aids, assisting with replacements and trouble shooting
- Counselling patients struggling with Tinnitus
- Discussing the posting of replacement hearing aids, ear moulds, replacement tubes and batteries as well as organising the collection and delivery of broken hearing aids from vulnerable adults, all free of charge
- Arranging to see a limited number of face to face patients if appropriate.

Faye Hopkins-Thorpe, Lead Audiologist said ***"We have completely reinvented how we work! Some of our patients are very anxious, understandably, so the team are making case by case judgements on how best to support patients and the admin team are doing a really good job of picking up these patients"***.

Deborah Chapman, Assistant Audiologist said ***"Solving a hearing aid problem or sending tubes, instructions or batteries is either a 'lifesaver' or an added bonus from our very grateful patients"***.

What makes it all worthwhile is the response from their patients who are over the moon with the service they are getting. Their messages of thanks include: ***"Thank you so much for calling, showing that you care and spending so much time with me on phone"***.

Find out more about the work of First Community Health and Care, part of the Surrey Heartlands partnership, at [www.firstcommunityhealthcare.co.uk](http://www.firstcommunityhealthcare.co.uk) or follow them @1stchatter

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact the Press Office on 07825 946551.**

**Notes for editors:**

1. Surrey Heartlands is a partnership of health and care organisations working together across most of Surrey – with staff, patients, their carer’s, families and members of the public – to transform local services and support people to live healthier lives. Together we are known as an ‘Integrated Care System’ – partnerships where health organisations, the local authorities and others take a *collective responsibility* for improving the health of the local population, managing resources (including money) and making sure services are high quality.