



Users help ensure clear communication at largest NHS Trust

With the advent of COVID and the installation of protective screens, King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust decided to re-assess their provision of assistive listening technology at their hospital on Denmark Hill.

The Trust is one of the UK's largest and busiest teaching hospitals. It employs more than 13,000 staff based across five sites – King's College Hospital, the Princess Royal University Hospital, Orpington Hospital, Beckenham Beacon and Queen Mary's Hospital in Sidcup.

Our engineers carried out a comprehensive assessment. It was decided that existing fixed and portable loop systems needed upgrading in order for patients and staff with hearing aids to be able to communicate more clearly. The Trust also recognised the need for window intercom systems to transfer speech from one side of the screens to the other.

New counter hearing loops and window intercom systems were installed at the main reception areas, including the Hambleton outpatient department. Counter loops were also put in at reception desks elsewhere in the hospital. Ward reception areas are to follow and each ward will also have a portable hearing loop so staff or family members can chat with patients at their bedside or in a private room.

In total, we will install assistive listening systems in 69 different locations, including one of the meeting rooms. Following feedback from a patient governor who was struggling to hear the



discussion, we recommended an infrared system. This gives good coverage throughout the room while making sure sound is contained within the space and confidentiality is maintained.

The Trust has a well-established patient experience group and members provide valuable feedback, helping test the systems as they go in.

Helen Cherry, part of the King's Patient Accessibility Advisory Group, said:

"Being able to provide input and share learning during any installation of accessible equipment benefits us all, and this occasion, demonstrated positive example of inclusion and not a tick box exercise.

"In this era of wearing masks and not being able to see faces to lip read, having use of induction loops throughout the hospital environment means I can switch my aids to directional audio which enables the spoken word to be streamed direct to my aids."

Taking part in the project has made Penelope Beschizza feel valued as a patient and as a deaf person.

"It's great to see the hospital is using real deaf/hearing aid users in the process. It was valuable to be allowed to feedback face to face in different parts of the hospital where acoustics tend to change the listening environment.

"We hope that through our deaf user and staff collaboration, the reception staff are more aware of communication with deaf patients and visitors."

The Trust's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team extended awareness of the new installation with a number of events during Deaf Awareness Week. Staff from Contacta attended to help staff better understand the technology and the difference it can make to communication.

As well as ongoing maintenance of the systems by our engineers, volunteers from the Trust will carry out monthly testing with a loop listener to make sure they are working to the correct standard.