What happens at the Newborn Hearing Screening Appointment?

Why do we screen babies hearing?
The aim of the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme is to find babies who have a hearing loss so that support and advice can be offered right from the start. 1 to 2 babies in every 1,000 are born with a permanent hearing loss in one or both ears. Most of these babies are born into families with no history of hearing loss. Permanent hearing loss can significantly affect a baby’s development. In many hospitals you will be offered a hearing screen for your baby before discharge or invited to a clinic appointment. The screen can be done up to 3 months (12 weeks) of age.

Newborn Hearing Screening is recommended for your baby. Finding hearing loss early is important for your baby’s development. It is important for you to attend all appointments offered to you and your baby.

Coming to Clinic

You may choose which clinic to visit – most parents choose the one that is closest to them or at the Hospital at which they had their baby.

When you arrive at the outpatient clinic you will usually be greeted by a receptionist who will ask you to take a seat in the waiting area.

The screener will come out and collect you and take you into the room. You will be allowed to bring a friend/partner/grandparent with you.

The screener will give his/her name and explain what is going to happen during the hearing screen. The screener will confirm details with you, which will include Baby’s Name, Date of Birth, Place of Birth, Home Address, Contact Phone Number and your GP’s Practice. The screener will ask you questions about your baby and about any family history of hearing loss.

Once the screener has all of the necessary information he/she will start the screen.

The Hearing Screen
The first screen is called the AOAE (automated otoacoustic emission). This screen takes a few minutes. A small soft tipped earpiece is placed in the outer part of your baby's ear and soft clicking sounds are played. When an ear receives sound, the inner part (which is called the Cochlea) responds and this is picked up by the screening equipment.
It is not always possible to get Clear Responses from the first screen. This does not necessarily mean your baby has a hearing loss. It can mean that:

- Your baby was unsettled when the screen was being carried out
- There was background noise
- Your baby has fluid or a temporary blockage in their ear. This is very common and passes with time.
- Your baby has a hearing loss

In these cases your baby will be offered another screen. This may be the same as the first screen, or another type called the AABR (automated auditory brainstem response) screen. This involves three small sensors being placed on your baby’s head and neck. Soft headphones are placed over your baby’s ears and soft clicking sounds are played. This screen takes between five and fifteen minutes.

The hearing screens are straightforward and most babies sleep right through them. There are no risks associated with having these screens.

**What happens if my baby has Clear Responses in both ears?**

If you baby has a Clear Response in both ears then they are unlikely to have a hearing loss. However, Newborn hearing screening does not pick up all types of hearing loss and children can develop a hearing loss later on. It is important to check your child’s hearing as they grow up. There is a checklist in your baby’s personal child health record (red book) which tells you how to do this. If you have any concerns about your child’s hearing tell your Health Visitor or Family Doctor.

**What happens if my baby has No Clear Responses in one/both ears?**

If the screens do not show a Clear Response from one or both of your baby’s ears an appointment will be made with Audiology to see a hearing specialist. About 2-3 babies in every 100 do not show a Clear Response on the screens. Being sent for tests at Audiology does not necessarily mean your baby has a hearing loss. A hearing specialist should see you within four weeks of having your baby’s hearing screen. It is very important that you attend the appointment in case your baby has a hearing loss.

For more information on the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme please visit: [http://hearing.screening.nhs.uk](http://hearing.screening.nhs.uk)