INTRODUCTION
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABMUHB) is piloting the introduction of a Primary Care Audiology Service. A significant proportion of ear and hearing related symptoms can be managed by Audiologists rather than by GPs. Patients will be seen by the most appropriate health care professional and help to reduce the number of GP contacts required. It is consistent with the Welsh Government’s strategy to increase the number of services provided in the community rather than in hospitals.

Within ABMUHB, three primary care networks have been selected as the pilot sites; Cwmtawe, Afan and Bridgend East. The Primary Care Audiology service will be piloted over a twelve month period to assess the effectiveness of the service. Audiology clinics began in August 2016 and will be extended to other GP practices within the selected cluster networks.

OBJECTIVES
The objectives of this service are:
1. Reduce demand on GPs for ear and hearing related symptoms
2. Reduce secondary care referrals being made to ENT services
3. Reduce the patient pathway
4. Provide a local service in patients’ communities

TRIAGE CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suitable for Audiologist</th>
<th>Require GP opinion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Over 16 years</td>
<td>• Under 16 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hearing loss (any type)</td>
<td>• Ear pain</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tinnitus (noises in ears/head)</td>
<td>• Ear Infection/ discharge</td>
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<td>• Blocked ears</td>
<td>• Dizziness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interested in trying hearing aid(s)</td>
<td>• Non-ABMU Resident</td>
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APPOINTMENT STRUCTURE
Primary Care Audiology appointments are currently 30 minutes in length and consist of a patient history, ear examination, hearing test and if required wax removal. Following the assessment, the results are explained and advice given. The patient is also involved in any onward referrals that may be indicated, such as ENT referral.

RESULTS
During August 2016, 22 patients were seen by the Primary Care Audiology service. Of these, only 2 (9%) required a GP opinion. The average wait to see a primary care audiologist was 3 days.

The most popular patient outcome was either an onward referral to Audiology for hearing aid considerations (50%) or the patient was discharged with advice (18%). The chart below illustrates the different appointment outcomes from the primary care audiology service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Care Audiology Service Appointment Outcomes*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discharged</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wax management</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENT opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audiology</td>
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*Some patients may have had more than 1 outcome, e.g. Had wax management and onward referral to Audiology

CONCLUSIONS
To date, the Primary Care Audiology Service has had a promising start with the majority of patients being managed by the primary care audiologist. The service has prevented 20 GP appointments during August at the pilot sites, and it is envisaged that this will increase with service promotion.

The service has enabled patients with ear and hearing problems to access an audiologist in a convenient location with a minimal appointment wait.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS
With evaluation, this service has the potential to develop further by:
- Expanding the service to other cluster networks within ABM HB
- Reduce the patient age to offer the service to the paediatric population
- Introducing non-medical prescribing for Audiologist which would increase the role of the primary care audiologist
- Management of non-complex dizziness, such as Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The Primary Care Audiology team would like to thank the Practice Managers, GPs and their teams at the pilot sites for their support with the service introduction. They would also like to acknowledge the valuable advice received from Mr Browning, ENT Consultant.

CONTACT INFORMATION
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