

Social Impact Report

UNLOCKING MULTIPLE HEALTH AND SOCIAL IMPACTS
REPRESENTING THE BEST NHS HEARING SERVICES



PREPARED BY MAKE AN IMPACT CIC
March 2023

About Chime



CHIME IS A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR THE WHOLE FAMILIES' AUDIOLOGY NEEDS FROM HOSPITAL TO HIGH STREET.

As a social enterprise, Chime is able to be agile and responsive to peoples' needs across the range of services, be present in the community, and provide long-term follow-up support. Any surplus funds remaining each year are invested back into service development for hearing impaired patients.

Chime delivers clinical pathways for a range of conditions associated with hearing loss from hospital-based services to high street audiology services. Services range from balance services, vestibular disorders, paediatric audiology, hearing therapy, tinnitus, through to hearing aid fitting.

How Chime's impact was measured

The report is based on data collected by Chime in 2022 and 2023 including:

- Data from each of the service delivery areas (service user numbers, services accessed and the impact of these services).
- Service user feedback routinely collected and collated by Chime using the Client Oriented Scale of Improvement (COSI); a clinical tool for outcomes measurement which enables service users to identify the listening situations that present the most difficulty for them, and to report improvements against these areas. In this case, the audit focused specifically on hearing aid users.
- A survey sent out to 3,395 service users (with 615 responses received) to assess the impact of Chime services on people's quality of life.
- Staff survey (engagement multiplier) results.
- Impact of Chime's operations in the community and the environment.
- Feedback and testimonials.



This report was produced by Make an Impact CIC, who completed the scoping, data analysis and the preparation of this social value report as well as the social return on investment calculations.

Key achievements

CHIME'S ONE-STOP SHOP FOR AUDIOLOGY NEEDS CREATES SIGNIFICANT AND WIDE-RANGING IMPACTS FOR ITS SERVICE USERS AND COMMUNITIES.

11 million people live with hearing loss making it the second most common disability in the UK¹.

Given there are approximately 5 million people nationally who could benefit from hearing aids who currently don't access them² there is a significant opportunity to increase the scale of Chime's operations to reach larger volumes of people in need of audiology services.

Key delivery achievements are:

- **30,400** active hearing aid service users.
- **4,752 devices** fitted each year (plus a smaller number of service users in its balance clinic and other pathways).
- Delivered via central hospital-based services and **14 outreach sites** on local high streets and communities, reducing barriers to access.
- The most commonly accessed pathway is the hearing aid assessment, fitting and follow up support pathway (with **5-year** follow-on support as standard rather than the sector norm of 3 years).
- **94%** of people would recommend Chime to friends and family.



¹ / ² *Deafness & hearing loss facts - Hearing Link Services*

Key impacts

Economic and environmental impact

Chime contributes to the local economy and reduces its environmental impact by:

- Employing local people.
- Creating career pathways through apprenticeships, degree and postgraduate courses.
- Spending £87,017 with local suppliers.
- Reducing travel for service users by having 14 outreach sites in local communities (averting 257,262 car miles).
- Refurbishing 80% of hearing aids.

AS WELL AS OFFERING CLINICAL EXCELLENCE, CHIME DEMONSTRATES OUTSTANDING VALUE FOR MONEY, WITH EVERY £1 INVESTED IN CHIME'S SERVICES DELIVERING OVER £13 OF SOCIAL VALUE.



Key impacts

The key impacts delivered by Chime throughout 2021/2 are:

- **86%** of people said they could hear better or much better at work.
- **82%** of respondents reported reduced isolation.
- **80%** of people reported being able to hear better or much better when watching TV or interacting in noisy places such as bars and restaurants.
- **74%** of respondents reported improved family relationships.
- **59%** reported hearing better or much better in group or meeting settings.
- Of the **31%** of respondents who are in work, 45% reported feeling more able to continue working after their hearing loss intervention, enabling people to continue to be economically active and avoiding substantial costs to the national economy in benefits allowances.
- **25%** of those reporting reduced reliance on social care support reported a reduction of more than 100 hours a month in social care contact time.
- **16%** of respondents reported feeling more confident to participate in community life after accessing Chime services.
- **15%** of respondents reported reduced contact with their GP ranging from 1-10+ hours less.
- **15%** of respondents reported balance or mobility improvements, reducing costs to the NHS.
- **14%** of respondents reported increased physical activity.
- **Reduced contact needed** with social care services, ranging from 5 hour to 100+ hours per month.
- **Increased social interactions** led to deferred intake to care home for people with other long-term conditions and slower onset of dementia.
- **Potential annual savings** due to reduced health and social care services contact of **£1.48million**.

Living well for longer

UNLOCKING MULTIPLE HEALTH AND SOCIAL BENEFITS.

By providing timely access to quality audiology services Chime not only restores functional hearing but unlocks multiple health and social benefits, preventing isolation and loneliness and improving social connection, enabling people to continue working, reducing falls and improving overall physical health, deferring the transition to a care home, delaying progression of dementia.



Reduced isolation

- **82%** of respondents reported reduced isolation, which was evidenced by improvements reported in hearing the television clearly; hearing in background noise; hearing in groups/meetings; using the telephone; hearing in the car; hearing when not face to face; hearing birdsong; hearing the doorbell; social situations such as clubs, cinemas and theatres.

This correlates closely to the **80%** of people in the most recent COSI audit who reported being able to hear better or much better when watching TV or interacting in noisy places such as bars and restaurants.

A slightly lower proportion of people (**59%**) reported hearing better or much better in group or meeting settings.

"I now enjoy birdsong and other high-pitched noise. Greater clarity. Phone through my aids is fantastic."

"(in conversation) ...it is such a delight to feel I can attempt to make a real response instead of simply nodding non-committally."

Living well for longer

Improved mental health

- **74%** of respondents reported improved family relationships, which are strongly correlated to improved mental health and overall wellbeing, and reductions in associated costs of poor mental health.
- Most respondents described not having to ask family members to repeat themselves or shout.

The most recent COSI audit reported even better outcomes, with **92%** of people reporting hearing better or much better during family or one-to-one conversations.



"I didn't realise I was missing out on so much. I can now hear my family when they are whispering or talking softly. It has changed my life and other members of the family as they don't have to shout or repeat their questions when I say pardon! Brilliant."



"I'm not having to keep on saying what or asking husband to repeat what he is saying."

"Family are more tolerant and less agitated during conversations as I can now hear them all."



Living well for longer



Ability to continue working

- At least **4.4 million** people with hearing loss are of working age.
- The employment rate for those with hearing loss is **65%**, compared to 79% of people with no long-term health issue or disability.
- Recent estimates suggest that the UK economy loses **£25 billion** a year in lost productivity and unemployment due to hearing loss¹.

Untreated hearing loss can have a number of consequences in the workplace and many of those in work who are struggling with hearing loss unnecessarily experience reduced opportunities for promotion or work at a level below their skills, knowledge and experience.

¹ [Deafness & hearing loss facts - Hearing Link Services](#)

Chime's impact

- **69%** of respondents were not in work, mostly because they were retired, which is representative of the overall demographics of Chime's service users.
- Of the **31%** of respondents who are in work, **45%** reported feeling more able to continue working after their hearing loss intervention, enabling people to continue to be economically active and avoiding substantial costs to the national economy in benefits allowances.

COSI data, which simply asked if hearing at work had improved (rather than asking if the hearing aid made them able to continue working), revealed that **86%** of people could hear better or much better at work.



"I work in a noisy environment and it is very important to be able to hear the answers to health questions that I ask. Wearing hearing aids has reduced the stress of my work."

"I am confident enough to take on small public speaking roles because can follow the discussion in then room and hear individual questions more easily."

Living well for longer

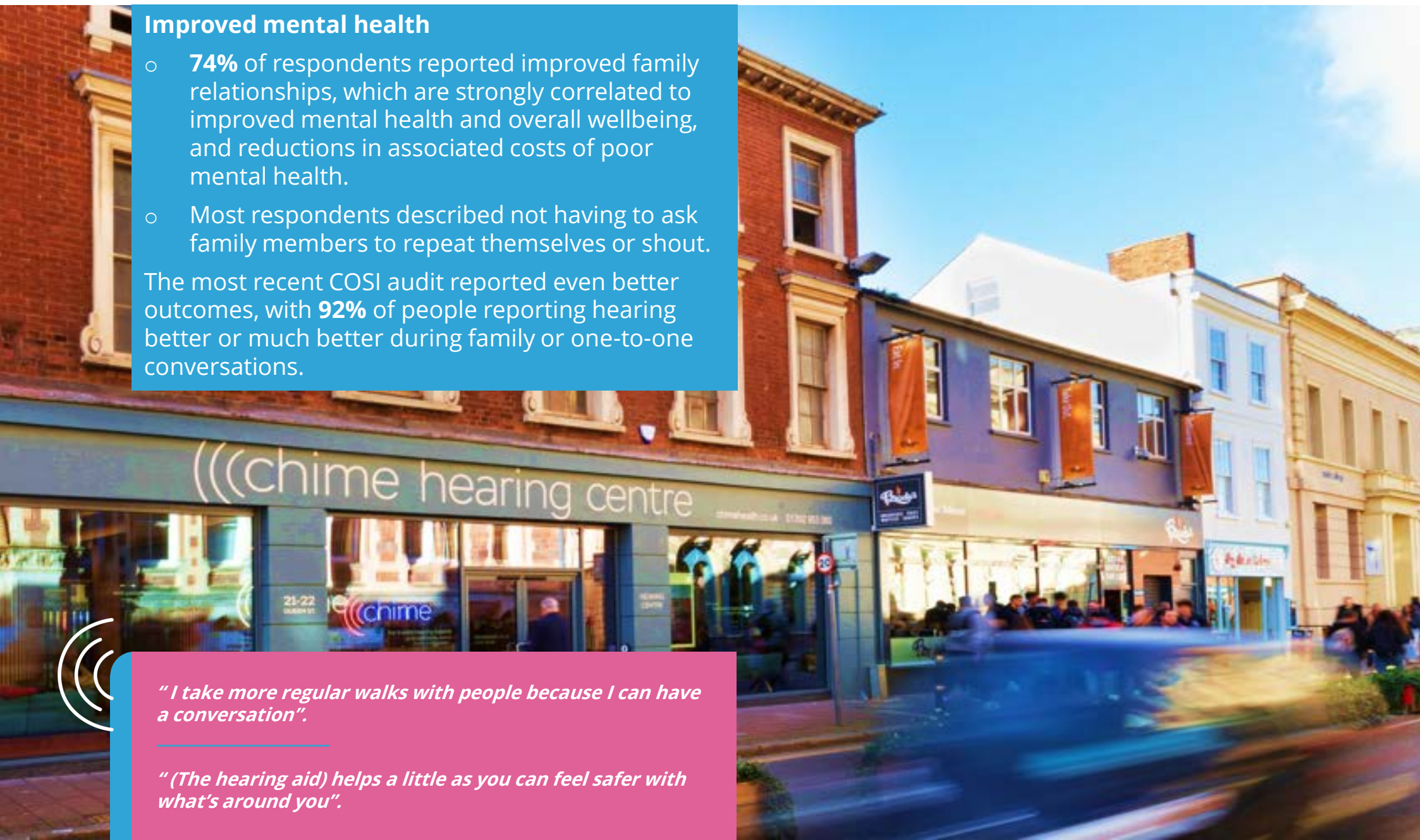
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"I take more regular walks with people because I can have a conversation".

"(The hearing aid) helps a little as you can feel safer with what's around you".



Living well for longer



More active in local community

Regaining confidence after reduced hearing loss helps older or retired people to become active in their communities (such as volunteering, members of local clubs and so on), increasing social connectedness and improving quality of life.

In the survey conducted for this report:

- **53%** were already active in community life.
- A further **16%** of respondents reported feeling more confident to participate in community life after accessing Chime services.



"I became a volunteer for the local library and toddler group".

"I am now on a committee of our local U3A, something I would not have considered before... I now have the confidence to sit in and contribute to meetings."

Cost savings for health services

REDUCED GP CONTACT.

Improved hearing has been seen to increase independence and in turn reduce peoples' reliance on primary care practitioners for support, reducing the burden on overstretched public services.

- **15%** of respondents reported reduced contact with their GP;
- The number of hours of contact reduced by a range from 1 hour to **+10 hours**, with an average of 0.6 hours of GP contact time avoided p/person per year, totalling **3 hours/person over 5 years**.

The potential cost savings annually from this reduced GP contact are **£232,642**.

"My symptoms have reduced following your input so I have not needed to trouble my GP again."

REDUCED SOCIAL CARE SERVICES CONTACT.

Chime's survey found a surprisingly high rate of reduction in reliance on social care services that was correlated to feeling better equipped to live independently.

- **1%** of respondents reported reduced contact with social care services.
- Whilst 1% is very modest, the number of hours of social care contact time reduced by **5-100+ hours per month**.
- **25%** of those reporting reduced reliance on social care support reported a reduction of more than **hours a month** in social care contact time.

The overall average social care contact time avoided was 28 hours per person over 5 years, giving potential savings of **£6.2million** in total or **£1.25million annually**.



Independent living

SUPPORTING ELDERLY PEOPLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY.

Reduction in falls

People experiencing hearing loss are at greater risk of dizziness, falls, and associated physical health problems. A study has shown that 13% of older people experiencing a fall within 3 years of hearing loss diagnosis whilst 45% of falls amongst older people result in hip fractures, which result in poor health outcomes and are very costly to the NHS¹.

Chime found:

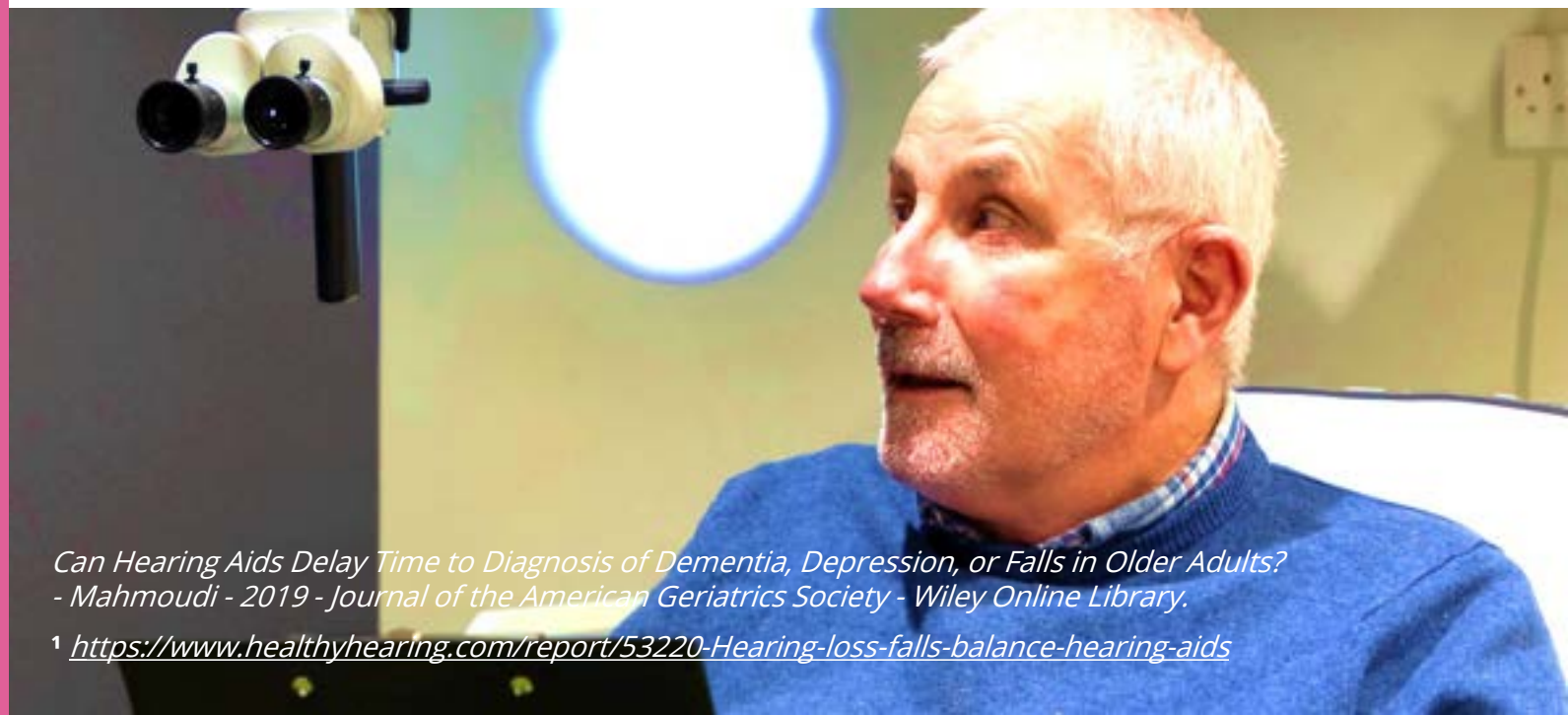
- **44%** of respondents were experiencing balance or mobility problems.
- Of these, **34%** of respondents reported improvements, pointing to significant costs to the NHS averted of **nearly £3.1million**.



"I do not get vertigo as often now."

"I noticed how I am less cautious about some movements. My body is more relaxed, and the biggest difference is less about mobility but ease. I had heaps of energy when I got my hearing aids. It was like I suddenly relaxed as I was not straining to hear everything."

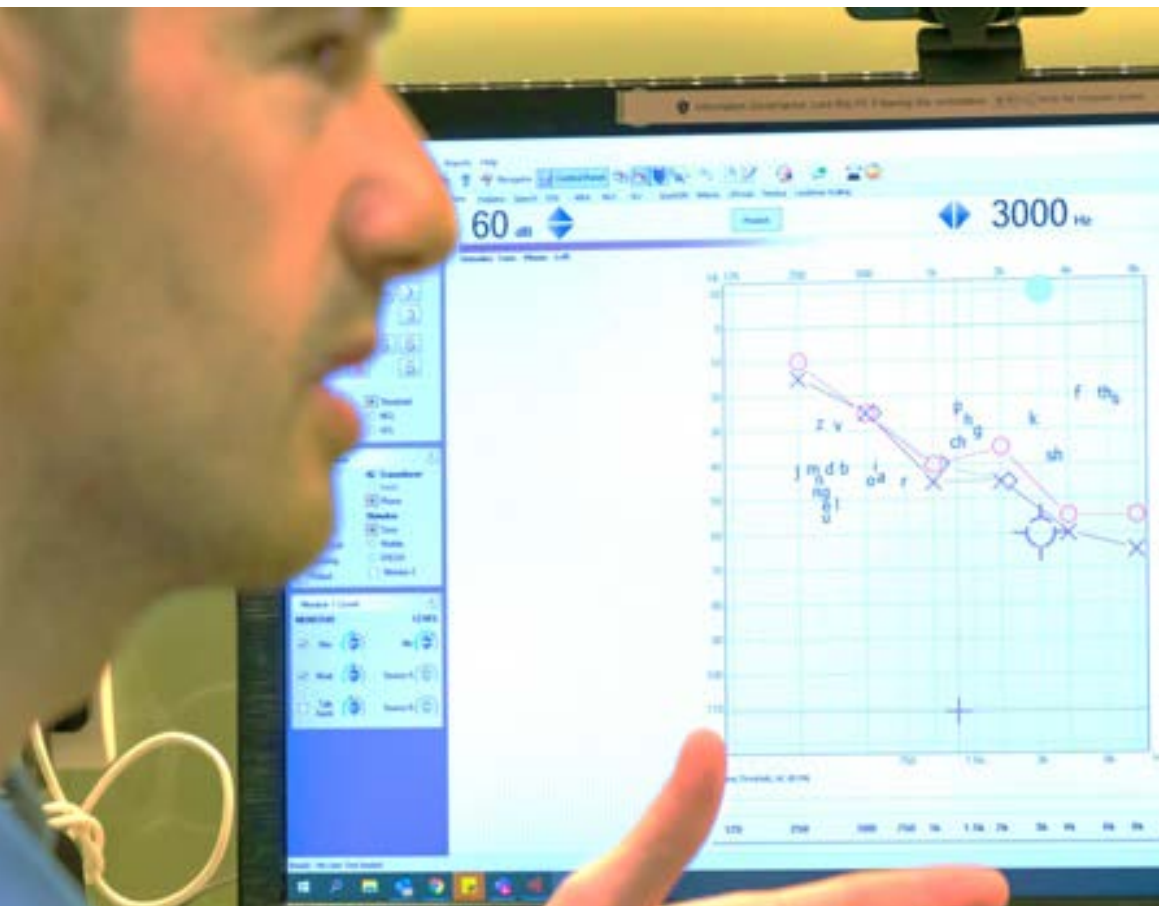
"I had help from the balance clinic part [at Chime] who assessed and identified an organic balance issue that I had. That has greatly helped my confidence getting out and about and I also now know the exercises I can do if I experience a deterioration again."



*Can Hearing Aids Delay Time to Diagnosis of Dementia, Depression, or Falls in Older Adults?
- Mahmoudi - 2019 - Journal of the American Geriatrics Society - Wiley Online Library.*

¹ <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53220-Hearing-loss-falls-balance-hearing-aids>

Deferred intake to care homes



DEFERRED INTAKE TO CARE HOME FOR PEOPLE WITH LONG-TERM CONDITIONS SUCH AS DEMENTIA.

There is an association between unassisted hearing loss and cognitive decline and dementia. Those with a mild hearing loss are twice as likely to develop dementia as people without hearing loss, whilst those with moderate hearing loss are three times more likely to develop dementia and those with severe hearing loss are five times more likely to develop dementia. It is estimated that at least £28 million per year could be saved in England by properly managing hearing loss in people with dementia.

Important research findings published in The Lancet in 2017 stated that one in three cases of dementia could be prevented if people managed a number of lifestyle factors in midlife (between ages 40 to 65) including hearing loss and hearing aids could prevent or delay up to 8% of cases:

“Hearing Impairment is the largest contributor to the Commission’s risk reduction model; 8% of dementia cases globally are attributable to this potentially modifiable risk factor. Among the potentially modifiable risk factors intervention with hearing aids could potentially prevent or delay up to 8% of dementia cases.”

Deferred intake to care homes

Chime found:

- **82%** of respondents reported reduced isolation. Whilst direct attribution is difficult, in particular judging exactly how much additional time living independently is gained through hearing loss interventions, it's clear that there are huge benefits to maintaining social connections and associated cognitive health.

“Using hearing aids has highlighted the importance of engaging in conversations instead of withdrawing which I know carries increased risk of dementia. I could notice the difference between my sister, who will not wear hearing aids, and me when we were in company the first time I went out wearing them. She could not hear so was not participating. This used to be me.”

Increased jobs & skills

A healthy workplace

Chime's Engagement Multiplier score is **80.1** with a participation score of **85.2%**, pointing to high levels of engagement across the board.

All employees have access to a trained Mental Health First Aider and to Perkbox which provides a range of employee benefits and rewards, alongside mental health and wellbeing support.

Creating career pathways

Chime is actively involved in creating career pathways, by partnering with local colleges to create apprenticeship schemes and pathways through to degree and postgraduate courses. Currently Chime has 8 apprentices and is supporting one employee to complete a degree course.



An engaged and diverse local workforce

Chime employs **43 people** (FTE), all of whom are residents of Devon and in commuting distance of their workplace. Taking account of the workforce and the Board:

- **100%** of the workforce are paid above the Real Living Wage (NHS band 3 minimum).
- **80%** of the senior leadership are female.
- **78%** of the workforce are female.
- **11%** of the senior leadership/Board have a disability.
- **5%** of the workforce have a disability.

Economic & environmental impacts

CHIME CONTRIBUTES TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND REDUCES ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IN SEVERAL WAYS.

Supporting the local economy

During the past year, Chime spent **£87,017** in the local supply chain, including a partnership with Co-Bikes (a social enterprise) to manage deliveries between Chime service delivery sites.

Reducing environmental impacts

Chime has proactively invested in reducing the distance that service users need to travel by car for appointments, resulting in **257,262 car miles** being averted.

- **229,606 car miles** averted by offering local clinics and a postal repair service.
- **27,656 car miles** averted by introducing telecare services.
- **104 car miles** averted by using Co-bikes for deliveries between sites.
- In the past year **4,150 devices** were refurbished to reduce plastic waste. Other devices are donated to international charities for further re-use. This represents an estimated 80% recycling rate.
- Chime's main equipment supplier, WS Audiology's manufacturing is certified to ISO 14001; **63%** of components of returned hearing devices re-used and **100%** of remaining components recycled.



Healthier, safer, more resilient

CHIME HAS DESIGNED ITS SERVICES TO BE RESPONSIVE TO A RANGE OF DIVERSE COMMUNITY NEEDS, PROVIDING A PROACTIVE, PREVENTATIVE SERVICE WHERE POSSIBLE AS WELL AS HAVING ESTABLISHED A CHARITABLE FOUNDATION - THE CHIME HEARING FOUNDATION - TO SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Early intervention

It is the only NHS provider in the area to routinely fit 'receiver in canal' aids (fitted to 30% of adult patients) which may lead to earlier adoption of hearing aids.

Vulnerable communities

In addition to its 15 sites across the local area, from hospital to high street to community centre, Chime also carries out home visits for vulnerable service users (averaging around 7 home visits per week).

Telecare

A total of 3,457 hearing aid users are registered to use telecare which enables them to access support with adjustments and maintenance of their devices online, whilst the website hosts videos (how to clean hearing aid, how to get used to your hearing aids and so on) as well as regular blogs which support patient self-management.

Signposting to other services

Chime signposts all its service users to other complementary support such as lip-reading classes and peer support groups via its leaflets and website.

Referrals to/from other organisations

Chime works closely with Advisory teachers through biannual independent meetings to discuss current working practices and audiology / educational/ technological needs for children, and through joint working groups such as local and regional Children's Hearing Services Working Groups. Chime also cooperates with charities such as the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and the National Deaf Children's Society, sharing information on its audiology services as well as information materials for families and children, and updates on availability of local and national courses.



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