

Tip of The Month April 2024: Recycling Hearing Aids (Karen Flower)

When faced recently with the task of recycling three pairs of hearing aids I was surprised to find this would not be as straightforward as I had expected.

The Audiology Department at Derriford Hospital is very helpful and will take back NHS hearing aids and send them to charity. Wherever possible the donated hearing aids are repaired, refurbished and sent overseas for re-use in developing countries.

However, when I tried to recycle some non-NHS hearing aids I was surprised at just how difficult this is. Some suppliers of non-NHS hearing aids (such as Specsavers) do not have recycling facilities and I was simply told to 'put them in the bin'. Privately purchased hearing aids cost anything up to three thousand five hundred pounds which makes this a huge waste of valuable resources as well as increasing unnecessary waste going to landfill. Importantly too, it denies adults and children in developing countries the gift of hearing as many do not have access to hearing tests or hearing aids.

This prompted me to try to find a charity to which I could donate the non-NHS hearing aids. UK Veterans Hearing Foundation, <https://www.veteranshearing.org.uk/> will accept some non-NHS models but not all. The charity services the donated hearing aids and then gives them to UK veterans, many of whom have impaired hearing or hearing loss due to their military service. There is an extensive list of hearing aid models the charity is able to accept and repurpose but do check the list because not all hearing aids can be recycled by this charity.



The Lions Club also has a hearing aid recycling scheme to provide affordable hearing aids for hard-of-hearing individuals who have limited resources or for people living in developing countries who would not otherwise have access to hearing equipment. <https://www.lionsclubs.org/en/explore-our-clubs/eyeglasses-and-hearing-aids-recycling>.

Adults and children with hearing impairment whose lives have been transformed after receiving recycled hearing equipment from Lions Club live in countries throughout South America and Africa, in India, and in many countries in south east Asia.

Latest figures show that approximately 1.5 million hearing aids are dispensed each year in the UK (both NHS and private) often replacing previously issued, older hearing aids. If you have hearing aids that you no longer use but are not sure what to do with, it would be worth considering recycling them via a charity as they could be a huge benefit to someone living with hearing impairment or hearing loss. It would, of course, have the added benefit of reducing unnecessary waste going to incineration.