



National Police Wellbeing Service CGG Good Practice Library Hub

Document Title	Functional Hearing Tests in Policing for hearing aids wearers
Document Type	National Guidance
Version	1.0
Author / Authors	NPWS Clinical Governance Group (CGG)
Link to Standards	Foundation /Enhanced Standards
Date of Approval	January 2026
Approval Committee	NPWS Clinical Governance Group (CGG)
Review Date	January 2028
Review Notes	
Valid for	Two years from date of approval
Open to local modification	No
EIA Completed	TBC

Welcome to the NPWS Good Practice Hub (GPH). This document and its contents support the national guidance *OH assessment of new police officer applicants: a clinical framework 2025*

National Guidance – Functional Hearing Tests in Policing for hearing aids wearers

Overview

This document provides comprehensive guidance for the use of Functional Hearing Tests (FHTs) for hearing aid wearers in policing in England and Wales. It ensures consistency, safety, and compliance in the assessment of Auditory Fitness for Duty (AFFD) where officers are unable to demonstrate Auditory Fitness For Duty (AFFD) using Pure Tone Audiometry testing or the Speech in Noise (SiN) Functional Hearing Assessment (FHA) developed by Amplivox and the CNC (due to incompatibility with these tests and wearing hearing aids).

Background

The College of Policing (CoP) recommends assessing the AFFD of applicants and officers who do not meet the PTA thresholds by utilising FHAs that have been appropriately validated in a policing environment.

Currently, only one known test is available, the approved test names FHA System, a test developed by the Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) in partnership with Amplivox and the University of Southampton. This test is not available in a free field environment and is not currently suitable for hearing aids wearers.

An interim FHT has been developed by the University of Manchester in conjunction with the Disabled Police Association (DPA), College of Policing (CoP) and Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC). This test was developed to enable forces to be able to consider whether hearing aids wearers were able to demonstrate a level of AFFD that aligned with non-hearing aids wearers who were able to demonstrate AFFD by the approved methods.

Legal and Regulatory Context

- PTA remains the primary hearing assessment under the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005.
- FHTs may support decisions on AFFD but cannot replace PTA for health surveillance.
- All AFFD decisions must be based on risk assessments, supported by appropriate medical input.
- Individuals who demonstrate AFFD wearing hearing aids must wear the aids at all times and be confident that they are working correctly whilst carrying out the role.
- It is the responsibility of the force to carry out individual risk assessments to confirm compatibility between the role and the ability to wear hearing aids and the specific hearing aid and any equipment required to carry out the role (eg headset, airwaves radio etc).
- This test is only approved for hearing aids wearers and must not be used to assess AFFD for other employees / applicants. It is advisable to ask candidates to ensure that their ears are free of wax in advance of attending the FHT to maximise their ability to successfully demonstrate AFFD.

Routes for accessing testing

The test can be accessed on line and is free to use. The test can be accessed at: Policehearing.org.

FHT Risk Assessment Outcomes

- 1. Fit for role with reasonable adjustments (e.g. hearing aids)
- 2. Not fit for role

Indications and Limitations

When to consider FHT using this method

- When the individual is a hearing aids wearer and the hearing aids have been changed or upgraded
- When determining role suitability during recruitment for hearing aids wearers
- When determining ongoing role suitability for hearing aids wearers
- As part of a wider individual risk assessment for hearing aids wearers

Limitations

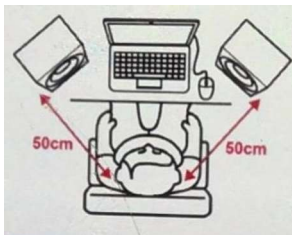
- FHT is not designed to assess risk of further auditory damage
- It is not a substitute for PTA in health surveillance
- This method is not validated for non-hearing aids wearers

Complaints Procedure

It is important that all forces adhere to this guidance document when carrying out FHTs, this will enable the consistent application of the FHT which will assist in terms of confirming consistency when considering AFFD. Forces should ensure that their complaints procedure covers the provision and/or commission of FHTs.

Process

- Access test at policehearing.org
- Allow ten minutes to set up test
- A quiet environment is required, there should be nothing to distract the listener
- The test must run on a computer, not a smart phone
- The computer must be connected to 2 stereo speakers, each speaker should be 50 cm from the listener



- Next measure the loudness of the room and the speakers. Professional equipment such as a sound-level meter should be used.
- Where this is not possible, install a decibel-meter app on a smartphone. There are some risks with these - they can vary considerably in the level given, and it can vary with aspects such as location of microphone within the phone, and the algorithm within the app. As a minimum if an app has a calibration function, that this must be used before taking the measurement.
- Examples of free apps include:
 - Android – DecibelX, SplendApps Sound Decibel Meter
 - IOS – DecibelX, NIOSH Sound Level Meter, Faber SoundMeter
- Start the app (or sound level meter) and hold it where the listener's head will be. Hold it in place until the reading settles. Measure the loudness of the room. This must never be higher than 35db. If the loudness exceeds 35db, a quieter place to hold the test must be identified.

- Next use the app/meter to measure and adjust the loudness of the computer speakers. Press the play button on page 4 of the Functional Hearing Test. You should hear a rushing sound from the speakers.
- Once again, measure the loudness where the listener's head will be. Adjust the volume control on your computer or speakers until the measured loudness is 70db.
- The listener should take a seat. They must be wearing their hearing aids.
- The facilitator must observe the entire test to ensure that the testing protocol remains in place throughout.
- The listening tasks will take about 8 minutes, the listener should work through the screens following the instructions. The test will start with a practice which lasts about 2 minutes.
- Once the listener has completed the practice the real test will commence. This will take about 4 minutes.
- Once the listener has completed the test their result will show on the screen. The test facilitator should note the result.

Result Interpretation, Decision Making and Record Retention

- Pass threshold:
- Scores over 20 meet the required hearing standard.
 - The listener's functional hearing can be considered adequate for operational requirements
- Scores of 20 or below do not meet the required functional hearing standard
 - If the listener has scored in this range, allow one immediate retest. Record the scores from both attempts.
 - If the listener scores 20 or below on two separate attempts, then they do not meet functional hearing requirements.
- A qualified clinician (doctor or nurse) must review outcomes. Results must be considered alongside other information where indicated (eg audiology review) and broader risk factors. An individual should not be regarded as fit for role until an informed individual risk assessment is completed
- The force is responsible for storing all records within the employee's medical record.

Pre-Test Considerations

- Subject's mental and physical state (fatigue, illness, stress, exposure to noise (Temporary Threshold Shift (TTS)))
- Presence of wax, infections, or recent Respiratory Tract Infections (RTIs)

Training and Ongoing Competency

- No training or CPD is required for facilitating this test. The testing protocol as set out in this guidance document must be followed on all occasions.

Record Management

- Test results must be retained by the force in the individual's medical record

Glossary

FHAs Functional Hearing Assessment (s)

FHTs Functional Hearing Test (s)

AFFD Auditory Fitness for Duty

SiN Speech in Noise

SRT Speech Reception Threshold

PTA Pure Tone Audiometry