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TX: YOU AND YOURS 12.02.03 - Waiting lists for NHS digital hearing aids

Presenter: Winifred Robinson

ROBINSON

You and Yours has discovered that waiting lists for the new digital hearing aids can be as long as 33 months in some parts of England and in Scotland they're available only in a very few health trusts. That's despite the fact that the Scottish Parliament has just allocated money to provide them. The Government has promised digital hearing on the NHS for everyone who needs one by 2005. But it's also been gradually providing them district by district for over a year now. Peter White's been investigating the situation and he's here.

It's a start. I think the important thing for most departments - I think learning from the English experience - is to get the

MULLIGAN

Well I want to see changes immediately starting to happen. We announced monies last year to deal with the waiting times, we've announced monies in January of this year to deal with the equipment and now we've announced an additional set of monies to really pump start any other needs that are out there. And I would want to see health boards now responding to this report in a positive way.

ROBINSON

Give us a timescale, I mean all these statements - respond in a positive way, let's put strategies in place - how long before people can go to their GP in Scotland and get a new digital hearing fairly quickly, within say six months even?

MULLIGAN

People should be able to go to their GP now and be referred to their audiology unit.

ROBINSON

But how long will they have to wait, that's the point isn't it?

MULLIGAN

Well the waiting times vary at the moment. What we're saying is that the additional 8 million that has been announced is over a four year period, within that time we would expect people to be able to see the audiology specialists within a reasonable time.

ROBINSON

Mary Mulligan many thanks.