



Practice manual for the use, supervision, training and approval of Hearing Care Assistants (2013)

Attributions:

BSHAA Education and Professional Practice Committee 2013

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1 Introduction

BSHAA is the professional body which represents Hearing Aid Dispensers (HAD) who are registered with the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC).

The Education and Professional Practice Committee in BSHAA, has undertaken to develop and describe a Hearing Care Assistant (HCA) role as part of the wider Hearing Care Team.

1.1 Aim

The primary aim of the development of the HCA role has been:

- to enhance client access to hearing care services by adding capacity to the hearing care team.
- to enable clients with more complex needs to be given greater attention by a HAD.
- to provide clients and carers with more time to discuss the practical aspects of their care needs.
- to develop a career pathway which will support progression into the Hearing Aid Dispenser profession.

- to facilitate sustained capacity and quality of service to meet the increasing demands for hearing care from an ageing population.
- to improve standards of client aftercare by creating a skilled support workforce.

1.2 Why Hearing Care Assistants?

In line with other professions, the contribution of a workforce to support registered practitioners has been discussed within BSHAA for a number of years. Building on work done to establish an approved HCA role, the approved training route to qualification and a list of those who successfully complete the training, the current Education and Professional Practice Committee has, in this document, drawn together a number of initiatives to provide the profession with guidance on introducing, training and supporting HCAs in practice.

For those companies and small independent practitioners who have been considering how a HCA could enhance their practice, this guidance provides clarity of tasks and activities which may be assigned along the client pathway.

1.3 Hearing Care Assistant Manual

The guidance in this manual reflects best practice at the time of publication, building on the Code of Conduct and Training Standards for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/codeofconductandtrainingstandards/>

It provides a framework for BSHAA members to use to develop Hearing Care Assistant roles within their practices.

The manual describes the HCA role in terms of:

- tasks which could be undertaken by an HCA,
- the potential HCA role along the Hearing Aid Client Pathway (Appendix 1)
- training programmes,
- responsibilities of BSHAA, the employer, the HAD and the HCA,
- and recommendations for supporting HCAs in practice.

2 Hearing Care Assistant Role

2.1 Definition

A Hearing Care Assistant is an employed non-registered but trained worker who, under the delegated authority and supervision of a named HAD, can undertake a range of activities along the hearing aid client pathway.

2.2 Role Description

A Hearing Care Assistant is described as someone who:

- is a care worker who has the attitudes, skills and knowledge to provide a range of agreed tasks and activities to provide safe and effective hearing care support to the Hearing Aid Dispenser within defined levels of supervision.

- has undergone an approved training programme.
- is supervised by, and working with, an HAD in their day to day work.

2.3 Key Tasks and Activities

HCA's support HADs in the preliminary assessment, fitting and follow up stages of the Hearing Care Client Pathway. The central focus of their work is to support and enhance the services provided by their supervising HAD to clients and their relatives and carers.

After successful completion of a BSHAA approved training programme, the HCA will be able to provide the HAD and their service with:

- effective communication with clients and their relatives or carers.
- the provision of general information to clients about currently available hearing aid systems and the professional services associated with their supply.
- accurate recording of client information contributing to a case history.
- the performance of otoscopy in accordance with current British Society of Audiology (BSA) recommended procedures. <http://www.thebsa.org.uk/resources/>
- advice to clients on earwax management.
- recording of pure tone audiometry, without masking, in accordance with current BSA recommended procedures. <http://www.thebsa.org.uk/resources/>
- take aural impressions in accordance with current BSA recommended procedures for the provision of earmoulds or other custom-made devices and ear fittings. <http://www.thebsa.org.uk/resources/>
- assistance to HADs in the fitting of hearing aid systems (including subjective and objective evaluation of aid performance and effectiveness, and teaching the client how to fit, to use and to care for hearing aids) as set out by the HAD in the management and rehabilitation plan agreed with the client.
- the provision of information and advice to clients regarding rehabilitation as determined by the HAD.
- advice and provision of assistive technologies to clients.
- the provision of appropriate post-fitting aftercare services.
- the recognition of where there is the need for advice and management from the HAD
- the ability to work co-operatively with other professionals in health and social care in the management of care plans for individual clients.

Hearing Care Assistants may perform some or all of the above in a variety of locations as directed by and under defined levels of HAD supervision. It is up to the HAD to undertake an assessment of risk when assigning tasks, taking into account the abilities of the HCA and the particular client.

2.4 Employing Hearing Care Assistants

In employing support workers to carry out some or all of the tasks identified above, an employer must ensure the support worker has undergone the appropriate training. The HCA role, in some cases, might be only a part of an individual's job description – this is for the employer to determine. Where some or all of the HCA role is part of that job, then the necessary HCA training should be completed.

2.5 Supervising Hearing Care Assistants

Like all care staff, HCAs are responsible for their own practice and conduct. They will, however, always work under the supervision of a designated HAD who, as the HCPC registered professional, will retain the ultimate responsibility and accountability for the clinical and rehabilitative management of the client <http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/standards/standardsofconductperformanceandethics/>

"Be accountable by making sure you can answer for your actions or omissions"¹

Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England 2013

Once an HCA has passed an approved training programme there may be circumstances when the supervising HAD is not physically present but they will always be readily available for consultation – indirect supervision.

Standard 8

You must effectively supervise tasks you have asked other people to carry out.³

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
Health and Care Professions Council

The supervising HAD will provide clinical and other professional guidance as appropriate. As the relationship develops between HCA and HAD and the HCA gains experience and confidence, close supervision may reduce

but the HAD will always remain in overall control of the clinical care to the clients.

Any HCPC registered HAD can be the named supervisor for a fully trained HCA, although it is recommended that newly qualified HADs have a period to consolidate their own practice before taking on this responsibility.

3 Training Programmes

3.1 Developing Training Programmes

BSHAA will assist training providers to develop training programme which will equip potential HCAs to deliver the role described above.

To become a BSHAA approved training provider for HCA courses, the provider must demonstrate that any proposed programme will:

Provide the necessary knowledge and understanding to deliver the BSHAA HCA role;

Ensure the student is competent to undertake the skills and interventions as described in the Hearing Aid Client Pathway;

Ensure students understand their responsibilities in line with the national code of conduct for support workers in health and social care;

Provide adequate opportunities for the practice, supervision and assessment of the skills and tasks described in the HCA role in partnership with the student's employer;

Ensure the student understands and meets the professional body standards for approved training.

In addition, training providers must explain the processes and procedures they have in place to address student, HAD supervisor and employer concerns during the period of training, and the tolerances for BSHAA involvement.

3.2 The Approvals Process

The training programme approval process is described in the Criteria for BSHAA Approval of Training Programmes (Appendix 2). The timings shown for the Approvals Process show the standards BSHAA has set for responding to potential training providers. The time for applicants to submit evidence to BSHAA is not limited.

3.3 Cost of Approvals Process:

An Approvals Fee (latest scale of fees from education@bshaa.com) is required for each submission.

The full approvals fee is required on submission of evidence. Any subsequent submission, made in response to the request for more information, may be subject to payment of an additional fee which reflects the amount of evidence to be reviewed.

3.4 Application Requirements

Appendix 2 sets out in detail the required evidence for approval including:

- documentation required;
- process and submission address;
- arrangements for, and assessment of, clinical/practical skills;
- renewal period and what to do when an approved course undergoes major changes.

3.5 Benefits of gaining BSHAA Approval

Advertising and running a BSHAA approved training course gives confidence to HCA employers that a course is of the correct quality and level to meet the needs of the HCA role described by BSHAA.

It also assures potential students that the training provider has clear processes in place for ensuring the quality of training, acquisition of practical experience and assessment procedures.

Employers, large or small, can have confidence that enrolling their employees on a BSHAA approved course will deliver suitable training for their aspiring HCAs and provide them, as the employer, with clear information and guidance as to their role in the programme.

If an employer, who is not also the training provider, finds that a course is not delivering to the BSHAA standards, then they can inform BSHAA who will investigate. BSHAA will also respond to concerns raised by a student HCA or a supervising HAD. After investigation, BSHAA may make recommendations for change should this be necessary or, in serious circumstances, withdraw approval.

4 BSHAA Membership

4.1 Student Membership

All students enrolled on a BSHAA approved training programme can sign up for free BSHAA student membership. This allows students to access a range of resources on the BSHAA web site as well as other membership benefits and gain an insight into what it is like to be part of the hearing care professional community.

4.2 Associate Membership

On successful completion of a BSHAA Training Programme, HCAs will have the opportunity to transfer their student membership to that of an HCA Associate member.

HCA Associate membership is only open to HCAs who can demonstrate they meet the BSHAA standards by successfully completing a BSHAA-approved training course. A list of HCA Associate members (approved HCAs) will be maintained by BSHAA, enabling employers and the public to know that a Hearing Care Assistant has been appropriately trained and that they can demonstrate that they are keeping their knowledge and skills up to date.

4.3 Renewal of BSHAA-Approved status

As with other members of the hearing care team, HCAs will be required to demonstrate their continued development in knowledge and in competence every two years. Suggested templates and resources to support this are available on the BSHAA website for the HCA to use.

It is hoped that employers will see this as a shared responsibility and provide development opportunities for the HCAs in their employment.

As part of the renewal process, the supervising HAD will be required to make a declaration in support of the HCA's continued competence and standard of practice.

4.3 What if there is a problem?

As a professional body, BSHAA has a role to support its members and promote the profession. There are a number of instances when a member may wish to seek BSHAA advice or support.

The following examples are given by way of illustration and do not signify the necessity of involving BSHAA or the limits of BSHAA involvement in any one case.

- Tasks outside HCA role

If an HCA is concerned that they are being asked to undertake tasks which sit outside the BSHAA HCA role and/or are not in line with the Hearing Aid Client Pathway, they should first approach their registered HAD using the BSHAA role description as a basis for discussion. In addition, reference documents setting out the responsibilities of HADs in assigning tasks can be found on the BSHAA website.

If this does not resolve the problem, the HCA could take matters further. If the HAD supervising them is not their direct employer then a discussion with company management may prove useful.

If the matter persists, Associate Members of BSHAA can contact BSHAA directly for guidance and support.

- HCA Competence

If the on-going competence of the HCA is a concern, it is the responsibility of the supervising HAD/employer to address and resolve the area of concern, in order for the individual to continue to act in the HCA role. A period of closer supervision may be required or additional training.

HADs can use the BSHAA HCA role description and the Hearing Aid Client Pathway plus the National Standards as an objective measure of performance to enable the area of concern to be described and named, so that appropriate action might be taken.

Any competence issues must be addressed as soon as they are detected and not left until the point of renewal of the Associate membership, when the supervising HAD might not feel able to make their declaration.

- Support for Students in Training

The responsibility for supporting a student in training is shared between the training provider and the employer. As part of BSHAA's requirements in the approvals process, training providers are asked to outline their procedures to support students in all aspects of the training.

If the training provider or the employer does not meet the BSHAA standards required during their training, then the student, as a BSHAA student member, will be able to seek advice and, if required, assistance from BSHAA.

- Supervising HAD does not provide adequate supervision

Failure to adequately supervise could put HADs at risk of breaching Standard 8 in HCPC Standards of Conduct Performance and Ethics, the responsibility for tasks delegated to others.

Concerns about the adequacy of supervision of an HCA should be referred to BSHAA, which will investigate, and onward refer to HCPC if appropriate

5 Roles and Responsibilities

The following section summarises the roles and responsibilities expected of individuals and organisations to enable the HCA to deliver safe, high quality care to clients, supporting the practice of their supervising HAD.

NB For clarity, the employer and HAD responsibilities have been separated below, with the understanding that for small employers one person is likely to fulfil both roles.

Role of BSHAA

- Regularly review the HCA role and associated training requirements to ensure they keep in line with best practice.
- Provide opportunities for HCAs, HADs and employers to keep up to date.
- Maintain the list of approved HCAs by operating a robust process for membership renewal.
- Manage the training programme approvals process within the standards and timelines set.

- Support and action, as required, for concerns raised by any category of member

Employer

- Enable and encourage the HCA to access development opportunities to maintain their role.
- Support the supervising HAD in practice.
- Set up processes to monitor and report the on-going competence of the HCA to support the renewal process.
- Ensure industry standards for approved training are in place.

Hearing Aid Dispenser

- Only delegate tasks for which you know the HCA is competent.
- Act at all times within the HCPC code of conduct.
- Monitor and support the HCA to keep updated and provide opportunities for development.
- Actively assess on-going competence and, where necessary, take action to remedy areas of concern.

Hearing Care Assistant

- Be accountable by making sure you can answer for your actions or omissions
- Promote and uphold the privacy, dignity and rights of people who use your services and their carers at all times.
- Work in collaboration with colleagues to provide high quality hearing care, knowing when to seek help/advice from an HAD.
- Take personal responsibility for keeping up to date and be able to demonstrate continuing development.

Appendix 1

Hearing Aid Client Pathway:

[HEARING AID CLIENT PATHWAY V2](#)

Appendix 2

Criteria for BSHAA Approval of Training Programmes:

[Criteria for BSHAA Approval of Training Programmes](#)