



THE HEARING AID COUNCIL

PUBLICATION SCHEME

**PREPARED
IN ACCORDANCE WITH
SECTION 19 OF THE
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**

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INTRODUCTION

This is the Hearing Aid Council publication scheme drawn up under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The purpose of this publication scheme is to set out:

- Classes of information we commit to publish as a matter of course
- How this information will be published
- Whether the information is available free of charge or on payment.

The scheme will be reviewed regularly.

PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THE HEARING AID COUNCIL

The Hearing Aid Council (HAC) is the statutory regulatory body for registered hearing aid dispensers (RHADs) and their employees and was set up under the Hearing Aid Council Act 1968 (as amended).

The HAC maintains professional standards of competence and conduct among RHADs and their employers.

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FORMAT AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The implication for our publications of the Disability Discrimination Act

Our publication scheme will be made available in hard copy or other means on request. A charge may be applied.

Our use of the Welsh language and of the foreign languages

The Hearing Aid Council does not routinely publish any of its documents in languages other than English and in certain cases Welsh. However, translations on a single copy basis will be made available on request. A charge will be applied.

PART ONE

HOW TO ACCESS INFORMATION

AVAILABILITY OF THE HEARING AID COUNCIL INFORMATION

Unless otherwise specified in this scheme:

- The classes of information we commit to publishing under this scheme are published both on the Hearing Aid Council website and in hard copy. See www.thehearingaidcouncil.org.uk.

Your rights to information under the FOI Act will come into force on 1 January 2005. From that date, with certain exemptions, the HAC will be required to:

- Let you know in writing or by e-mail if we hold the information you have asked for; and
- Provide to you any information we have within 20 days.

We will also have a general duty to provide advice or assistance to you or to anyone seeking information (e.g. to explain what information is available or to clarify what you want to know).

Structure of the Scheme

The Scheme lets you know what information is readily available from us. By 'readily available' we mean information that is on our website, or that can be obtained from us by letter, fax or e-mail.

In creating and reviewing this Scheme, we have to consider the public interest when:

- Allowing public access to the information we hold; and
- Publicising the reasons for decisions that we make.

By law, our Scheme must:

- Set out the classes of information that we publish or intend to publish;
- Say how we will publish the information in each class; and
- Say if we will provide the information free or charge for it.

The Scheme is in three parts:

- **Part One** tells you about the Scheme.

- **Part Two** sets out the classes or types of information that we publish or intend to publish. It also contains a list of classes of information that will generally not be made available.
- **Part Three** is the Publications List, which tells you what information is published, how it can be obtained and whether it is free of charge.

The Scheme is available on the HAC website (www.thehearingaidcouncil.org.uk) or from the HAC offices.

The purpose of the Scheme is to make information accessible should you ask for it.

Obtaining Information under the Scheme

The HAC routinely publishes large volumes of information on its website. Most information provided in the scheme will be freely available for downloading from the website. Other information listed in this Scheme, which is not available from the website, will be available when requested in writing from the HAC offices.

Information listed under the Scheme may be requested by letter, fax or e-mail. A form for requesting information is also available on the website or from the HAC offices.

- Hard copy publications are available through the Registrar.
- The information subject to this scheme is available free of charge.
- There is no commitment to publish information held by the Hearing Aid Council for more than 3 years.
- We do not undertake to publish information held by the Hearing Aid Council which predates August 2004, the date this scheme came into force.

Requests for information can be made to the Registrar, The Hearing Aid Council, 70 St Mary Axe, London, EC3A 8BD.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PUBLICATION SCHEME

The Registrar has overall responsibility for the Hearing Aid Council Publication Scheme.

The person responsible for maintaining the Publication Scheme on a daily basis is the Director of Policy and Communication.

CHARGES FOR INFORMATION IN THE SCHEME

Charging for Information in the Scheme

Generally, access to information held by the HAC will be free of charge. Single copies of any publication listed in our publication list will normally be available free of charge from our website or from the Registrar.

Charges may be imposed for:

- Producing multiple copies of specified information in paper or other format.
- Specified hard copy publications.
- Translations.
- Other means of publication

Charges will reflect the staff time necessary to produce the information and any copying and postage. We will let you know these charges when you request the information and we will require payment in advance.

Charging Regimes

In the Publications List we indicate which of the following charging regimes could apply:

<i>Free on Website (FOW)</i>	There is no charge made by us for downloading the information from the website, although the user will have to meet any charges made by the Internet Service Provider ("the ISP") and/or telephone company as well as any personal costs for printing, etc.
<i>Free of Charge Hard Copy (FOCHC)</i>	Indicates that information will be provided in a hard copy format from the HAC office free of charge.
<i>Chargeable Hard Copy (CHC)</i>	Indicates information that is available from the HAC offices on payment of a charge.

MONITORING OUR PUBLICATION SCHEME

Tell us what you think

We want our publication scheme to meet the needs of our members and stakeholders. Suggestions for particular classes of information to which we might in future commit to publishing under the scheme will be welcomed. Any comments on or complaints about the scheme should be sent to the Registrar of the HAC at the address given above:

We will monitor demand for the information published in accordance with this scheme. Details of this process may be obtained from the Registrar.

Complaints against the Scheme

If you have a complaint about the operation of the Scheme:-

- Write to the Registrar at the HAC offices seeking resolution of your complaint.
- If you are not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may write to the Information Commissioner, who is appointed to consider such complaints at the address shown above.

Request for Personal Information

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 ("The DPA"), you already have a statutory right to have access to personal data we hold about you on computer or in a structural manual file (i.e. on paper). You also have the right to expect the HAC, as the Data Controller, to ensure that data is:-

- Processed fairly and lawfully
- Obtained for specific and lawful purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive for that purpose

- Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
- Not kept for longer than is necessary
- Processed in accordance with your rights as the data subject
- Kept secure
- Not transferred abroad unless to countries with adequate data protection laws.

For the purpose of the DPA:-

- "Personal data" is information that relates to a living identifiable person
- "The Data Controller" is the person or organisation that controls the purpose and manner in which data is processed
- "The Data Subject" is the person to whom the data relates.

Where we are the Data Controller, and subject to certain exemptions (see below), you are entitled to be told whether we hold personal data about you and, if so:

- To be given a description of the personal data in question
- To be told for what purposes the personal data is processed
- To be told the recipients, or classes of recipients, to whom the personal data is or may be disclosed
- To be given a copy of any personal data held with any unintelligible terms, acronyms or codes explained
- To be given any information available to us as the source of the personal data.

A form for applying for access to your personal data is available from the website or on request from the HAC offices. A fee of £10 must accompany your request for personal data under the DPA. You will be required to supply proof of your identity. You may also be required to provide us with further information in order to allow us to locate the information that you seek. A request for access to personal data will be dealt within 40 days of receipt of the request and payment of the fee.

Exempted Information

As with the FOI Act, the DPA provides some exemptions to disclosure in relation to certain classes of information. If the exemptions apply to the information you have requested you will be informed in writing. However, the HAC will not necessarily confirm or deny if such data is held about you.

Complaints

If you consider that a request for access to your personal data has not been dealt with properly you may:-

- Write to the Registrar at the HAC offices seeking resolution of your complaint
- Write to the Information Commissioner, who is appointed to consider such complaints at the address shown above.

PART TWO

CLASSES OF INFORMATION

Introduction

This Scheme aims to make as much of our information as possible readily accessible to the public, on a continuous basis.

The HAC will make available information within the Information Classes described below, unless it falls within the exempted information also detailed below. Information falling into the classes below will be retained in accordance with our data and documents retention policy.

The HAC has adopted a model Scheme developed nationally for similar regulatory bodies. The type of information provided through this Scheme by the HAC will be similar to that available for other regulatory bodies.

Under each Information Class can be found brief descriptions of the information available within the class.

Under each publication listed in the Publication List can be found:

- The format in which the information is made available
- "Notes" containing any relevant additional information
- An indication as to any charge that may be made.

Information Classes

We will publish information in the following classes, some of which may be chargeable (see above):

Administration

- Information relating to the administrative structure of the organisation
- Information relating to finance and business planning
- Information relating to employment
- Information relating to the governance and work of the HAC

Registration

- Information relating to the Register
- Information relating to requirements for registration

Education

- Information relating to training including Continuing Professional Development
- Information relating to recognised qualifications

Investigations and Disciplinary

- Information relating to standards of conduct and competence
- Information relating to disciplinary proceedings

Communication

- Publications produced by the organisation
- Press Statements

Other Information

- Any other information that does not relate to one of the other classes outlined above.

Exempted Information

The following information will not normally be made available to the public:

Administration

- Sensitive personal information relating to members of staff or contracted staff, Members of Council, Visitors, Advisors, including specific terms and conditions of employment and remuneration.
- Minutes of, and supporting papers relating to, matters discussed in closed sessions of Council, committee or working group meetings or minutes deemed sensitive or commercial.
- Financial information relating to specific contracts or other commercially sensitive matters.

Registration

- Sensitive personal information relating to applicants and registrants, except where such disclosure is required by statute or has otherwise been previously notified to the data subject.
- Any details of registrants where the HAC has reason to believe that such information may be used for unapproved commercial purposes.

Education

- Documentation relating to the recognition / approval or otherwise of individual qualifications or educational institutions.

Investigations and Disciplinary

- Papers relating to preliminary and investigative enquiries.
- Personal data relating to complaints.
- Any evidence adduced at a hearing before the Disciplinary Committees except where such material appears in the transcript of such proceedings.

All Classes

- Any information subject to legal or professional privilege, or other relevant privilege, for such period as the privilege remains active.
- Any other information that may be subject to exemption under the provisions of the FOI Act, subject to case by case consideration of individual requests.

PART THREE

Freedom of Information Act 2000

HEARING AID COUNCIL PUBLICATION SCHEME

PUBLICATIONS LIST

In this section are details of the information readily available from the HAC together with an indication as to how such information may be obtained and whether there is any charge. Availability and costs will be indicated using the following codes:

Free on Website (FOW)

There is no charge made by us for downloading the information from the website, although the user will have to meet any charges made by the ISP and/or telephone company as well as any personal costs for printing, etc.

Free of Charge Hard Copy (FOCHC)

Indicates that information will be provided in a hard copy format from the HAC office free of charge.

Chargeable Hard Copy (CHC)

Indicates information that is available from the HAC offices on payment of a charge.

Class	Sub-class	Title/Description	Notes	Availability
Administration	Staff	Staff List	List of HAC staff and key responsibilities	FOW FOCHC
	Finance	Annual Accounts	Audited financial statements. Available after submission to Parliament	FOW FOCHC
		Corporate Plan	Extracts from the HAC corporate plan. Regularly updated.	FOW FOCHC
	The Council	Members List	List of Members of the Council	FOW FOCHC
		Open Minutes	Minutes of open sessions of meetings of the Council	FOW FOCHC

Class	Sub-class	Title/Description	Notes	Availability
		Register of Members' Interests	Register of the Direct, Indirect and Non-Pecuniary interests of members of Council. Regularly updated.	FOW FOCHC
	Annual Report	Annual Report	Annual report produced by the HAC. Contains details of audited financial statements, together with reports from statutory committees.	FOW FOCHC
		Code of Conduct	Sets the regulations and governance of the HAC.	FOW FOCHC
Registration	Register	Statutory Register	May be inspected by appointment at the HAC offices.	n/a
		Online Register	Available through website. Contains similar information to the Published Register but is regularly updated. Register can be searched by Name, Town/City and Postcode.	FOW
	Registration	Registration Information Pack (Recognised Qualifications)	Information pack for those practitioners with a recognised qualification who wish to apply for Registration. Contains application form and supporting information for each route to Registration.	FOCHC
Education		Criteria for the Recognition of Degrees in Audiology	The document outlined the requirements courses and institutions must meet in order to offer a recognised qualification.	FOW FOCHC
		Recognised Qualifications List	List of those qualifications currently recognised by the HAC	FOW FOCHC

Class	Sub-class	Title/Description	Notes	Availability
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Regulation	Standards & Conduct	Code of Practice	Mandatory Code of Practice for Registered Hearing Aid Dispensers issued by the HAC	FOW FOCHC	
	Complaints	Complaints Statistics	Statistics on the number of complaints received against dispensers and their disposal.	FOW	
	Disciplinary Committee	Notices of Charges to be referred to the Disciplinary Committee	Notices of Charges to be referred to the Disciplinary Committee	Notices of charges to be considered by the Disciplinary Committee in relation to specific complaints against individual dispensers. Published 28 days prior to any hearing.	FOW FOCHC
			Notices of Hearing	Where a hearing is to be held in relation to formal allegations, the HAC publishes a notice of the time, date and place of any hearing. Hearings are normally held in public.	FOW FOCHC
			Notice of Findings	Notice of the decision of the Disciplinary Committee in relation to formal allegations, together with the Committees reasons and the sanction(s) applied.	FOW FOCHC
			Transcripts of Proceedings	Transcripts of public hearings before the Disciplinary Committee.	FOW CHC
	Appeals	Notices of Hearing	Notices of Hearing	Where a hearing is to be held in relation to an appeal against a decision of the Disciplinary Committee, the HAC publishes a notice of the time, date and place of any hearing. [Hearings are normally held in public but the appellant may elect that the hearing is held in private.]	FOW FOCHC
			Notices of Decision	The HAC publishes all decisions of appeals	FOW FOCHC
			Transcripts of Proceedings	Where an appeal hearing is held in public, the transcript of those proceedings can be obtained.	CHC

Class	Sub-class	Title/Description	Notes	Availability
	Information Notes	Making a Complaint to the HAC	An information note for patients and the public on the process for making a complaint to the HAC.	FOW FOCHC
		Publication Schedule	Schedule detailing the publication of various notices relating to proceedings before the Disciplinary Committee. Includes details of the period in which notices will appear on the HAC website.	FOW FOCHC
Communications	Press Statements	Press Statement List	List of statements/clarification notes issued to the press on a variety of topics.	FOW FOCHC
		Press Statements	Individual statements issued to the press.	FOW FOCHC

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act was passed on 30 November 2000. It created a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. It also sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities.

The Information Commissioner has a duty to promote best practice under the FOI Act and to ensure compliance. The Commissioner's address is:

The Office of the Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk