BRITISH ACADEMY
OF AUDIOLOGY

British Academy of Audiology

Position Statement on Registration and Regulation

Strategic position followed by implementation framework

Official Document No: OD1840 v1

Executive Summary

This position statement sets out the British Academy of Audiology's strategic position on professional registration and regulation within the UK audiology workforce. It recognises that current arrangements are fragmented, with practitioners registered through different bodies or, in some cases, not registered at all, creating inconsistency in professional accountability, public assurance and workforce governance.

BAA believes that all audiology professionals should be included within a single mandated registration framework appropriate to their role and scope of practice. BAA supports the long-term development of protected professional titles and proportionate statutory regulation, while recognising that interim solutions are required to strengthen professional standards and patient safety.

Pending wider regulatory reform, BAA recommends that registration with the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) or the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), where appropriate, becomes an expected professional standard and is progressively embedded within recruitment, retention, education, continuing professional development and workforce governance arrangements.

The statement also outlines the responsibilities of practitioners, employers, education providers, professional bodies, and national system leaders, together with a proposed implementation roadmap. Collectively, these measures are intended to strengthen public protection, improve consistency across services, enhance professional recognition, and support a sustainable future workforce for audiology in the United Kingdom.

1. Background

Audiology in the United Kingdom is a profession marked by a wide range of titles. Practitioners have been known as Registered Hearing Aid Dispensers, Clinical Scientists, Audiological Scientists, Hearing Therapists, Audiologists, Medical Technical Officers, and Assistant or Associate Audiologists, among others. More recently, the designation Healthcare Scientist specialising in Audiology was introduced through Modernising Scientific Careers.

This diversity of titles and qualifications has created complexity in professional registration. Multiple routes to qualification operate alongside different forms of regulation and registration. Audiology professionals in the UK may currently be eligible to register with the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS), the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), or both, depending on their qualification, protected title and scope of practice.

1.1 Why registration matters

The purpose of professional registration is to safeguard patients and the public by providing assurance that practitioners have the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours required to practise safely. Registration also helps define scope of practice, establishes accountability to nationally recognised standards and provides a framework through which standards can be maintained.

Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development is a core requirement of registration. Registrants must maintain and develop their knowledge and skills, demonstrate how learning supports their practice and, where required, participate in audit. This provides assurance that professional development remains meaningful and focused on safe, effective patient care.

Fitness to practise

Where concerns are raised, a registration body can consider whether professional standards have been breached through an independent fitness to practise process. Outcomes may include no further action, conditions on practice or removal from the register in the most serious cases.

1.2 Registration bodies

Health and Care Professions Council

The HCPC is an independent statutory regulator. It sets standards for education, professional skills, conduct and performance and maintains a register of those who meet its requirements. Hearing Aid Dispenser and Clinical Scientist are protected titles, and their use is restricted to appropriately registered practitioners.

Academy for Healthcare Science

The AHCS provides accredited voluntary registration for healthcare science roles that are not currently subject to statutory regulation. Its registers are accredited by the Professional Standards Authority and provide audiology practitioners, including Audiologists, Hearing Therapists and Educational Audiologists, with a mechanism to demonstrate professional accountability and commitment to recognised standards.

2. Current issues with registration in audiology

The Kingdon Review of Children's Hearing Services highlighted significant concerns about the status, governance, and professional oversight of the audiology workforce. It identified fragmented professional representation, the absence of a single professional register, inconsistent processes for assessing fitness to practise and constraints on continuing professional development. Similar themes have additionally been recognised across the UK. In Scotland, the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Independent Review of Audiology Services included actions

relating to workforce governance, professional standards, education, and assurance arrangements to improve quality and safety within audiology services. In Wales, the Future Approach for Audiology Services identifies workforce development, professional registration, clinical governance, higher qualifications, and enabling audiologists to work at the top of their licence and registration as key priorities for future sustainability and quality of services.

Together, these programmes reflect a broader recognition that professional accountability frameworks are essential components of service quality and public protection. While professional registration does not guarantee competence, it establishes a minimum threshold for practice and provides mechanisms for accountability, professional standards, and public protection.

The present position remains fragmented:

- some audiology professionals are not registered with any professional regulator or accredited register
- some are registered through the voluntary AHCS framework
- some are statutorily registered with the HCPC as Hearing Aid Dispensers and/or Clinical Scientists

This mixed model creates uncertainty for patients, the public, employers, and professionals. Dual registration may be appropriate where a practitioner works across distinct protected roles. However, unnecessary duplication can increase cost and create uncertainty about which organisation should consider concerns about practice.

3. BAA position

3.1 Mandatory registration

In 2004, the Health Professions Council recommended statutory regulation for clinical physiology, and that proposal was accepted by the then Secretary of State for Health. The policy direction changed following the publication of Enabling Excellence: Autonomy and Accountability for Health and Social Care Staff in 2011, which stated that new statutory regulation would be introduced only in exceptional circumstances where voluntary arrangements were insufficient and a compelling case could be made.

The AHCS was subsequently established as an overarching registration body for healthcare science and operates accredited registers under the Professional Standards Authority. Registration remains voluntary for significant parts of the audiology workforce, leaving employers with substantial responsibility for assuring professional accountability.

A consistent registration framework may strengthen workforce governance by establishing common professional standards and clear routes for addressing concerns relating to conduct or fitness to practise.

BAA considers the findings of the Kingdon Review, The Independent Review of Audiology in Scotland & the NHS Wales hearing care: future approach to audiology services to all provide a compelling patient-safety case for reform. Voluntary arrangements alone have not delivered a consistent national expectation of registration across audiology. **BAA therefore calls for every audiology**

professional to be included within a single mandated registration framework appropriate to their role and scope of practice.

While discussions of professional registration frequently focus on public protection, accountability and workforce standards, registration may also enhance the professional recognition of audiologists and support the development of a coherent professional identity. Achieving and maintaining registration requires investment from both practitioners and employers through registration fees, continuing professional development and associated governance processes. Although these arrangements have resource implications, they may also contribute to workforce development, professional credibility, and public confidence. Consideration should therefore be given to ensuring that any registration model delivers value for individuals, employers, and the wider healthcare system.

3.2 Protected titles and statutory regulation

The statutory regulation of healthcare science remains divided. Clinical Scientists are regulated through a protected title, while many other practitioners delivering audiology care remain outside statutory regulation. BAA calls for protected titles for Audiologist, Hearing Therapist and Educational Audiologist, supported by proportionate statutory regulation.

A coherent statutory framework would reduce ambiguity, strengthen professional accountability, and demonstrate national recognition of the expertise and responsibilities of the audiology workforce. BAA's long-term position is that the profession should be supported by a single mandated registration framework and a clear, consistent regulatory model.

3.3 Interim mandatory registration through AHCS

While progress towards statutory reform continues, **BAA calls for clear national guidance to employers. Registration should be made as a requirement through recruitment and retention processes for roles that currently fall within the AHCS framework.** Existing staff should be supported through a fair and time-limited transition to achieve the registration appropriate to their qualifications and scope of practice.

4. Application of the BAA position

The following sections translate BAA's strategic position into a practical professional standard for the audiology workforce. They apply to assistants, associates, audiologists, and other practitioners working in UK audiology services, regardless of grade, banding, or employment sector.

4.1 Professional expectation

BAA recommends that all practitioners within scope hold, or are actively working towards, professional registration with the AHCS or HCPC, according to their qualifications and scope of practice. Where registration is not currently a statutory requirement, BAA considers registration to be a core professional expectation and an essential component of safe, high-quality care.

4.2 Consistency, quality, and public confidence

Audiology services depend on the accurate performance and interpretation of diagnostic assessment. These activities directly inform diagnosis, monitoring, and treatment decisions. The primary benefit of registration is not the assurance of competence itself, but the establishment of consistent professional standards, accountability mechanisms, and public confidence in the profession.

Without a universal expectation of registration, arrangements for recruitment, training and competency assessment can vary between services. Registration supports consistent minimum standards across NHS and independent-sector providers and contributes to equitable, evidence-based care.

4.3 Professional recognition and career development

Professional registration strengthens the identity and recognition of assistants, associates, and audiologists within the wider healthcare workforce. It supports professional parity, clearer career pathways, workforce mobility and stability, and recognition of the expertise and responsibilities held at each level of practice.

Registration must be matched to the practitioner's role, qualification, and scope of practice. AHCS routes may support assistant, associate, and practitioner-level recognition, while eligible practitioners who complete the Scientist Training Programme or demonstrate equivalence may apply to the HCPC for registration as a Clinical Scientist.

5. Responsibilities for implementation

- **Practitioners:** hold, or formally work towards, registration appropriate to their qualification and scope of practice; maintain continuing professional development; and practise in accordance with the standards of the relevant register.
- **Employers:** include registration requirements in job descriptions and person specifications; verify registration status; provide appropriate transition arrangements; and maintain clear governance where an applicable register is available.
- **Service managers:** support portfolio development, equivalence applications and continuing professional development, including protected time and access to appropriate supervision where required.
- **Education providers:** design and clearly describe programmes that confer, or support, eligibility for the relevant AHCS or HCPC registration route and ensure learners understand their professional responsibilities.
- **Professional, regulatory and registration bodies:** work together to provide clear public information, reduce avoidable duplication and support a coherent national framework for registration and regulation.
- **Governments and national system leaders:** progress the policy and legislative changes required to establish protected titles and proportionate statutory regulation for the audiology workforce.

6. Proposed implementation roadmap

Timeline	Proposed milestone
By end of 2027	Job descriptions and person specifications for qualified audiologists and above include registration, or active pursuit of registration, appropriate to the role.
From 2028	Professional registration is included as a requirement for new appointments to audiology roles where an appropriate register is available.
By 2029	All Band 7 and above practitioners hold appropriate AHCS or HCPC registration.
By 2030	All staff within scope hold, or are formally working towards, professional registration appropriate to their role.

This roadmap is presented for consultation. Its adoption should be informed by workforce readiness, equality impacts, access to registration routes and subsequent national policy or legislative change.

7. Conclusion

Professional registration is fundamental to safe, consistent, and accountable audiology practice. BAA's strategic position is that all audiology professionals should be included within a single mandated registration framework, supported by protected titles and proportionate statutory regulation.

Pending that reform, appropriate AHCS or HCPC registration should be embedded within recruitment, retention, education, continuing professional development and workforce governance. This will strengthen patient safety and public confidence, improve consistency across services, support professional recognition, and enable a clearer and more sustainable career framework for UK audiology.

Professional Registration in Audiology

Key considerations and potential impacts

Public protection

Supporting safe, high-quality care for individuals and communities.

Accountability

Clear professional standards and expectations.

Fitness-to-practise processes

Mechanisms to investigate and address concerns.

Complaint mechanisms

Accessible routes for raising and resolving concerns.

Professional identity

Strengthening the recognition and profile of audiology.

Recognition of audiology as a profession

Greater visibility and credibility within healthcare.

Consistency of standards

A common benchmark for professional practice.

Career development

Supporting progression, specialisation and advanced practice.

A stronger, more sustainable audiology profession

Better for people.
Better for services.
A brighter future.

Workforce implications

Supporting a skilled, stable and future-ready workforce.

Recruitment

Enhanced professional recognition may help attract new talent.

Retention

Clear professional pathways and support for development can improve workforce stability.

Advanced practice development

Enabling expanded roles and maximising the contribution of audiologists across services.

Economic implications

Balancing investment with long-term value.

Registration fees

Direct costs for individual practitioners.

CPD costs

Investment in maintaining and developing professional knowledge and skills.

Employer support requirements

Costs related to supervision, professional development and workforce compliance.

Administrative/regulatory infrastructure

Resources required to support registration and governance arrangements.

Potential savings

Opportunities for improved governance, reduced risk and higher quality, more efficient care in the longer term.

Professional registration has implications across multiple domains.

By considering the benefits and challenges, we can ensure a proportionate, sustainable approach that supports individuals, services and the peoplewho use audiology services.

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