



# TAKING CARE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND

16 July 2008

I am delighted to be able to tell all Dispensers that the British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists is today launching the complaint resolution scheme for private hearing care.

In 2009 BSHAA is planning to participate in the development of a Consumer Code that will give customers an assurance of higher standards of consumer protection than required by law. It will be approved by the Office of Fair Trading and will give us a unique selling point in the market as well as offering clients the confidence of good customer care practices, so critical to professional and business success in the future.

This Society recognised at the outset that our industry will need to demonstrate self-regulation and good standards of customer care when the Hearing Aid Council is abolished, along with the hearing aid-specific consumer regulations. If the industry is not seen to be providing adequate standards of consumer protection into the future, the Society believes there is a real risk of the introduction of further legislation and regulation.

But why participate in the complaint resolution scheme NOW?

Early introduction of a user-friendly complaint resolution scheme will give the company, the Dispenser and the sole trader/practitioner the impetus to adopt and undertake training in new customer care practices, so demonstrating an industry-wide commitment to positive standards of customer care. The Society believes this will also address, resolve and ultimately reduce the number of complaints which need to be formally considered by the Hearing Aid Council in the final months of its existence.

Any size of company employing dispensers, and sole trader/practitioners, can benefit immediately from participating in this scheme. We already know that large, medium and small companies across the industry are very willing to address customer care standards at this time – addressing and ultimately reducing complaints; and demonstrating their willingness to self-regulate. There has also been strong feedback from our most recent study day that the members want their companies and businesses to be involved.

So that sole trader/practitioners **DON'T GET LEFT BEHIND** you now have the opportunity to join in and offer your customers the same assurance of higher standards of protection than is required by law.

Mark Georgevic  
President

For more details please read the attached summary or visit the new Consumer Care section on our website, [www.bshaa.com](http://www.bshaa.com) and click on "Consumer Care" for full details. You can register your interest, online, by e-mailing the BSHAA Chief Executive Alan Torbet [chiefexecutive@bshaa.com](mailto:chiefexecutive@bshaa.com) or by completing and returning the tear off reply below to The Secretary, BSHAA, 9 Lukins Drive, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1XQ.

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TAKING CARE OF MY CUSTOMERS

I am a sole trader and I would like to participate in the complaint resolution scheme

Trading Name.....Correspondence address.....

.....BSHAA membership number (if any).....

Contact details: Name.....Telephone.....e-mail address.....

# TAKING CARE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS

## Resolving complaints in private hearing care

### SUMMARY

The full details of the complaint resolution scheme are on a new Consumer Care section on our website [www.bshaa.com](http://www.bshaa.com). It has been developed by a working party of BSHAA, AIHHP and industry representatives, the RNID and Hearing Concern. The Hearing Aid Council supports the initiative to resolve complaints.

“Participating company” includes sole traders.

The complaints resolution procedure is based on the good practice principles in the Consumer Code, and is as far as possible compliant with Code guidance and the requirements of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

All participating companies must have in place a speedy, responsive and user friendly procedure for the resolution of complaints, i.e. any expression of dissatisfaction regarding the product and / or service supplied.

All customers must be informed how to make a complaint; to whom within the company they should address their complaint; what information they are required to provide; and the timescales that will apply to dealing with the complaint. Complaints must be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and should be addressed within 20 working days.

The customer must be informed by the company that should this process fail, they have the right to contact the Conciliation Officer at BSHAA and, if need be, independent arbitration.

There is no charge to the customer or company for BSHAA conciliation. The costs for arbitration are met by the company: the service is at no cost to the customer.

Participating companies should offer maximum co-operation with consumer advisers or any other intermediary consulted by the consumer, such as a Citizens Advice Bureau, or Trading Standards Officer.

The customer’s legal right to complain to the HAC is not compromised.

Participating companies will publicise how customers can get their complaints resolved; using a ‘How to Complain’ leaflet; written to good practice standards for client information; and available with contractual material and at points of sale. The danger of implying that we expect to disappoint people is recognised, and so the leaflet should be phrased to give confidence not concern.

Participation requires adoption of and adherence to good customer care principles and practice. However the specific requirements to achieve compliance are deliberately as general as possible, thereby allowing participants to tailor their own procedures in line with their capabilities and resources. This approach is designed to maximize and maintain willing participation throughout the industry.

A key objective for the introduction of a new complaints resolution procedure now is to reinforce good, consistent customer care practice within the industry. However the leaflet can be adjusted to reflect the size of the company and its structure for handling complaints, and to complement in-house documentation, design styles and brand/logos.

All leaflets must also carry the BSHAA logo. The BSHAA Conciliation Officer will hold a copy of the leaflet, a complaints management policy and a named contact point for complaints, for each participating company.

Participating companies will ensure that staff are trained in customer care. Dealing positively with customer complaints benefits all parties.

Participating companies will ensure that all complaints are logged and a step-by-step log of progress on the complaint is kept and can be made available to the conciliation or independent arbitration service if required. Likewise, a log of all communications and copies of all correspondence relating to the complaint should be kept and made available if required.



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