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Dear Registrant

Changes to the regulation of hearing aid dispensers – what do they mean for you now and in the future?

Over the next year the regulation of hearing aid dispensers will fundamentally change. I wanted to take this opportunity to advise you of the specific changes to the requirements placed on you as a dispenser, what action you need to take to ensure you comply with these requirements and the date from which these new requirements will be implemented.

New CPD standards

The Hearing Aid Council recently consulted on changes to its CPD standards. The Council proposed that with effect from the 1st April 2009, the current points-based system should end and that dispensers would be required to meet standards that mirrored those of the HPC. Having considered the consultation responses, the Council has decided to go ahead with these changes.

What do these changes mean for dispensers?

From 1st April 2009, dispensers will be required to:

1. Maintain a continuous, up to date and accurate record of their CPD activities.
2. Demonstrate that their CPD activities are a mixture of learning activities relevant to their current and future practice.
3. Seek to ensure that their CPD has contributed to the quality of their practice and service delivery.
4. Seek to ensure that their CPD benefits clients.
5. Present a written profile containing evidence of their CPD upon request.

You can make your own decisions about the kinds of CPD activity that are relevant to your role and your work. For example, CPD activities could involve in-house training, mentoring, reading or reviewing journal articles or attending industry events. You may decide that you could meet these standards by taking part in the BSHAA CUE scheme or CPD schemes run by other professional bodies. To ensure you meet these standards, you should:

- assess your learning needs, in terms of your current and future practice;
- devise a programme of different CPD activities to meet your learning needs (for instance, you might plan to attend several BSHAA CUE events, plus some other activities);
- assess your progress towards meeting these needs and make appropriate changes to your CPD; and
- record all of your activities in a log.

Further information about the new standards, examples of CPD activities you can undertake and other relevant information is available on our website. If you are a member of BSHAA or one of the other professional bodies, you should also check their websites and other information they may provide.

How will the Hearing Aid Council check my CPD?

Points-based CPD requirements for 2007-9

The enclosed retention form asks you to make a declaration about your CPD for two years up to 31st March 2009. You are asked to either:

- declare that you have met the CPD points required of you; or
- set out an action plan specifying how you will meet the CPD points expected of you.

In July 2009, we will write to all those dispensers who submit a CPD Action Plan, asking them to evidence their CPD activities and completion of their plan. We will also write to a random sample of those dispensers who declared that they have met the requirements, asking them to provide evidence of their CPD.

New CPD standards

In December 2009, we will write to a random sample of dispensers and ask them to provide evidence of their progress towards meeting the new CPD standards. This will include evidence of their learning needs assessment, of their planned programme of CPD activity and of any CPD work they may have completed. We will then provide feedback to BSHAA and other professional bodies about where further support is necessary, which areas may cause concern and what needs to be done to improve compliance. From 1st April 2010, the Health Professions Council will undertake a rolling programme of CPD audits. You should therefore expect to be audited on a regular basis.

Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics

You will be aware that clause 1a of the Code of Practice 2008 requires dispensers and their employers to:

“Maintain at all times a high standard of ethical conduct in the operation of their practices, the dispensing of hearing aids and the training of trainees.”

From 1st April 2010 (once you are transferred to the HPC), this requirement will be replaced with the HPC's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. These standards require that you:

1. Act in the best interests of your clients.
2. Respect your client's confidentiality.
3. Keep high standards of personal conduct.
4. Provide to the HPC and other relevant regulators important information about your conduct and competence.
5. Keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.
6. Act within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience and, if necessary, refer the matter to another practitioner.

7. Communicate properly and effectively with your clients and other practitioners.
8. Supervise effectively tasks that you have asked other people to carry out.
9. Get informed consent to give treatment (except in an emergency).
10. Keep accurate records.
11. Deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection.
12. Stop working or limit your work if your performance or judgement is affected by your health.
13. Behave with honesty and integrity and ensure your behaviour does not damage the public's perception of you or your profession.
14. Make sure that anything you advertise is accurate.

Most dispensers will already meet these standards or will need to make minor changes to meet them. However, I recommend that all dispensers take some time to familiarise themselves with these requirements and assess their compliance against these requirements. Further information about these requirements, what they mean and how the HPC will assess you against them is available from the HPC website at www.hpc-uk.org/publications/standards/.

Code of Practice

From 1st April 2010 (when you are transferred to the HPC), the Hearing Aid Council's Code of Practice will cease to have effect and will be replaced with the HPC's Standards of Proficiency for Hearing Aid Dispensers. These standards have been developed and consulted upon, and approved by both the Hearing Aid Council and the Health Professions Council. They will be published shortly, and I will write to you again when these standards are available.

Other information

I would highly recommend that you take some time to check out information published on our website and on the HPC's website. There is plenty of information about how the change in regulation will happen, what you will need to do and what standards will apply to your practice. As always, the HAC team will be attending industry and professional body events to provide further information and advice, and can also answer any specific questions you might have. The most effective way to raise issues or questions is via email at hac@thehearingaidcouncil.org.uk or by phoning the office on 020 3102 4030.

Over the next twelve months, I will regularly write to you, advising of steps you might need to take or new information that becomes available. This is designed to help you understand how HPC regulation will affect you and your practice, what help is available to you and what steps you need to take to comply with the requirements placed on dispensers.

I hope this is helpful. The next year will be challenging but exciting and should lead to significant benefits for hearing aid consumers and dispensers.

Yours sincerely



Chris O'Leary
Registrar and Director of Policy