

Educational Audiology Professional Registry Now Open

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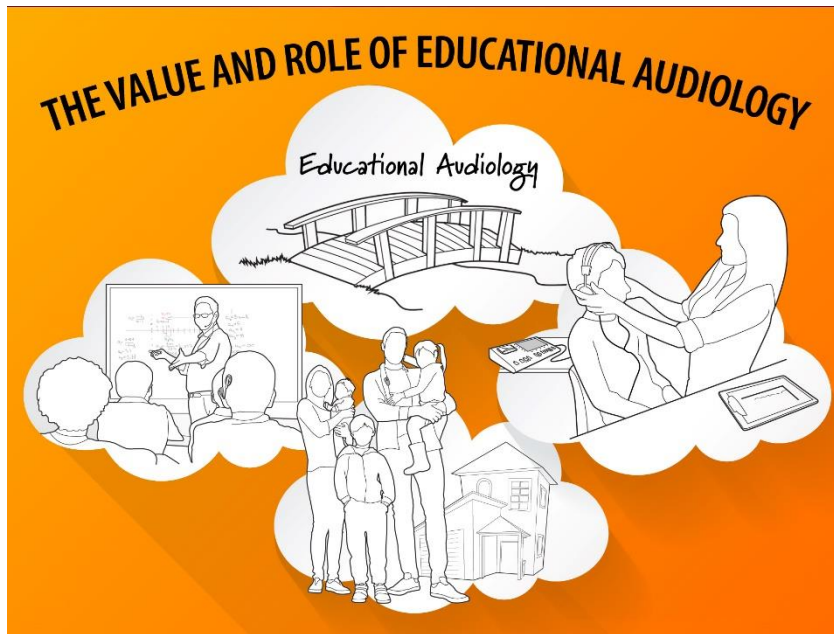
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Educational Audiologists can now register professionally which is a first in the UK and in many other countries as well. This voluntary registration opened in summer 2018 with the Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists (RCCP), which maintains six discipline's public registrant database and are known for high practice standards. Awareness of the value of the role of Educational Audiology, in relation to partnership working with Clinical Audiology especially, is being raised by the new registration as well as a new BSA Grow e-learning module.

Significant benefit for children and young people who are deaf and their families will result from the awareness raising and the impact of this professional registration, about which the British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA) is extremely pleased. The BAEA membership mandated this initiative several years ago placing very high value on the potential to progress joined-up working between Health and Education, increase public recognition of the need for these links and of the Educational Audiology role that is pivotal to these links in many regions.

Empirically, the issue is evidenced by data presented at 2017 BATOD conference and cited in 2017 Department for Education *Future of the Sector* report by Brian Lamb; and the Educational Audiology role is viewed as key, critical, vital, crucial, and essential by authors such as Simkiss and Madell, by Head of Sensory Services survey responders; and by the BAEA. Educational Audiology is a varied and multi-faceted role across the country, but most often includes at least these aspects amongst many others:



- improving hearing instrument (HI) validation in a functional setting
- managing signal-to-noise ratio largely via radio aids, and
- liaising/partnering with Clinical audiology, Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs), other professionals and parents/carers on these issues. Anecdotal evidence includes collections of case studies of the BAEA and Educational Audiology trainees.

Potential fiscal threats are a risk to the nonmandatory role; as priority funding of new trainees for the ToD mandatory qualification with an aging demographic according to recent Consortium Research in Deaf Education surveys means potentially less funding for nonmandatory roles. This could possibly engender gaps in service provision in this realm. For Educational Audiology, as a nonmandated but extremely valuable role, professional registration opening comes as at a judicious time due to that risk.

A memorandum of agreement was developed between the BAEA and the British Academy of Audiology (BAA) as part of the process to create the register. RCCP accreditation of the Educational Audiology postgraduate course (the only one in the country) was overseen by BAA. Educational Audiologists are trained at Mary Hare (now affiliated to University of Hertfordshire). Correspondence archives reveal that for more than a decade registration has been an aim for the profession. Autumn 2014 saw a renewed process begin in earnest when BAEA first met with the BAA and RCCP for forward panning of Educational Audiology course accreditation and professional registration routes. From there the registration journey was reviewed, including the first step of BAA endorsement of the academic content and delivery of the PGDip/MSc course by the BAA Accreditation of Academic Education Committee (AAEC) in winter 2017 and next necessary steps for accreditation, which typically covers clinical competencies typically.

The importance of joined-up working was highlighted by the ways in which these two related, though different, professional bodies collaborated, which provided mutual benefit for development. After successful endorsement was achieved in February 2017, a successful RCCP accreditation followed in April 2018. November 2018 course graduation heralded the first graduates who are automatically eligible to register. Prior graduates can access RCCP registration via an equivalency process.

Educational Audiologists are being empowered to continue to enact their bridging role with parents/carers, clinical audiologists, Teachers of the Deaf and other professionals by virtue of this new registration, which will further benefit children and young people who are deaf and their families. Additionally joined-up working between Health and Education related to audiology, can benefit from Mary Hare beginning in Sept 2019 to offer stand-alone module options from the MSc PGDip Educational Audiology course. A Professional Opinions Survey in 2017 evidenced this need, showing that both Heads of Service and practitioners in the educational and clinical audiology fields would welcome such shorter-term CPD opportunities, possibly whilst awaiting opportunity in future to undertake the entire qualification. Topics to be covered include areas such as Radio Aids, Psychoacoustics, Anatomy and Physiology, Whole Case Management and Developing Communication.

For nearly five decades since 1970's Education Act, leaders in deaf education have engaged in efforts to liaise with the wider audiology field in this way. These particular efforts have now come to fruition with achievement of the voluntary professional registration, the first-ever for Educational Audiologists; and carry forward the future-proofing of this essential role.

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<https://www.rccp.co.uk/articles/50/The-Process-of-Application-to-the-Register>

