Become A Hearing Aid Dispenser

A Guide to Recruitment, Development and Registration as a Hearing Aid Dispenser
Become A Hearing Aid Dispenser

A REWARDING CAREER IN AUDIOLOGY, WITH ONE OF THE COUNTRY’S LEADING RETAILERS OF INDEPENDENT HEARING HEALTHCARE.

THE ROLE

A Hearing Aid Dispenser is a registered healthcare professional that specialises in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of hearing impairment. They work closely with their client to understand the difficulties caused by their impairment and the specific situations in which improvement is desired.

They conduct a wide variety of tests, with specialised equipment, to identify the exact nature of a person’s hearing disorder.

Hearing Aid Dispensers provide a variety of treatment solutions for people suffering from hearing disorders, ranging from education and advice through to the sale of hearing instruments and assistive devices and the provision of the necessary support to assist the client through the integration of their chosen solution into their life.

Hearing Aid Dispensers sell, fit, program, service and modify hearing aids. They provide aural rehabilitation, educate the public on the effects of noise and the importance of hearing protection, and identify and assist in the management of tinnitus. Hearing Aid Dispensers refer clients to physicians when the hearing or a vestibular disorder needs medical or surgical attention.

Within the UK The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) regulate the Hearing Aid Dispenser role. The title of Hearing Aid Dispenser, and the activity of ‘dispensing’ are protected under UK law making it an offence for anyone without the necessary registration to dispense hearing aids.

Hidden Hearing provides a programme of HCPC approved education and development for all employees that are successfully recruited into Trainee Hearing Aid Dispenser roles.

Completion of the approved programme means that the Trainee is eligible to apply for HCPC registration to become a Hearing Aid Dispenser.

Continuing employment to the role of Hearing Aid Dispenser is conditional upon attaining HCPC Registration.
Who Are Hidden Hearing?

ONE OF THE LARGEST INDEPENDENT HEARING CARE RETAILERS IN THE UK.

The Hidden Hearing Mission Statement

“TO HELP THE HARD OF HEARING LIVE THE LIFE THEY WANT WITH THE HEARING THEY HAVE”

OUR PEDIGREE

Hidden Hearing Limited entered the UK independent hearing market in 1969 and has since grown to have a UK base of over 400 employees around 170 of who are Registered Hearing Aid Dispensers.

The Company owns 80 Hearing Centres and uses shared clinical facilities in over 100 additional sites including Lloyd’s pharmacy and their Health Villages. In addition, a network of field-based dispensers provides services to customers in their own home where a visit to a clinic or Hearing Centre is not possible.

Hidden Hearing Limited operates throughout the UK mainland, The Channel Islands and The Isle of Man. The company is wholly owned by William Demant Holdings, a publically listed Danish company specialising in all aspects of hearing.

Each year Hidden Hearing conducts over 100,000 hearing assessments and generates over £34m revenue through the sale of hearing aids, batteries, accessories, and other services.

The company is a bespoke healthcare service provider and differentiates itself in the market in the provision of tailor made solutions designed to enrich the lives of clients and their families.

The company has a corporate headquarters in Maidstone, Kent, comprising Marketing, IT, Finance, HR and Customer Services all placed to support the provision of the highest levels of service and support to our dispensers and our clients.
STUDENT HEARING AID DISPENSERS ARE SUPPORTED BY

- Education Supervisor
- Practice Educator
- Team Leader
- Area Manager

PROVIDED TECHNOLOGY

- Laptop Computer
- Mobile Phone
- Printer
- Broadband
- Audiometer

COMPANY VALUES

- Approachable Managers
- Clear and Open Communication
- Trust and Integrity
- Being A Responsible Employer
- Recognising Employees as Individuals
- Providing Employee Development
- Provide necessary feedback, support and direction to enable all employees to contribute effectively to the company.

SUPPORTIVE MANAGEMENT – AUTONOMY – CORPORATE CULTURE

HOW WE WORK

The company operates a flat management structure. There is a UK Board of 4 directors and 7 Area Managers who each manage a geographical part of the country. Within the specific area, the Area Manager is responsible for all staff within the Hearing Centres and the field based dispensers.

Once registered, a Hearing Aid Dispenser is placed in a team with around 5 other colleagues, one of who will report to the Area Manager as a Team Leader. The prime role of a Team Leader is the support and ongoing development of the team members. Once experienced, the Hearing Aid Dispenser role is quite autonomous with regular reporting to the Area Manager via telephone and email.

All Area Managers and Team Leaders are themselves registered Hearing Aid Dispensers.

Prior to HCPC registration, trainee Hearing Aid Dispensers are supervised by a ‘Practice Educator’, a role specifically placed for day-to-day advice, supervision, guidance and practice. Practice Educators support trainees in gaining experience, providing additional training, assessment and monitoring the trainee’s development through regular visits and meetings and ‘logbooks’. Trainees will also have an ‘Educational Supervisor’ for the periods of formal education and development.

Open and clear communication is part of the corporate culture and each area has regular business meetings and continual professional development events, for all staff, throughout the year.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

As an employee you will be provided with all the technology to enable you to send and receive company communication and client records. This includes mobile phone, computer and broadband service.

All client appointments are managed through electronic diary management and full client histories and records including audiograms and prescriptions are managed electronically through daily data exchange.

Hidden Hearing continues to invest in advanced technology.
Hidden Hearing pays for:

- Disclosure (DBS) Checks, these are explained on page 8.
- All training course fees.
- All training materials including stationary and text-books.
- Certificate, Assessment and Exam costs.
- Accommodation when away from home.
- All meals when away from home.
- Return travel to training location.

Your Commitment to Hidden Hearing

- Complete the scheduled programme and gain the award.
- Successfully complete and maintain your HCPC registration.
- Contract to a period of continued employment as a Registered Hearing Aid Dispenser with Hidden Hearing for at least 2 years past initial registration or pay back a portion of your training fees.

Hidden Hearing Training

Your training and development will be managed by, and mostly delivered by, the company’s own training department in Buxton, Derbyshire. The training facility was established in 2005 and extensively redecorated in 2013. It comprises:

- Residential accommodation for 22 trainees in private en-suite study bedrooms.
- Communal lounge and breakout areas
- Conservatory eating area
- Main classroom with full AV projection and sound facilities
- Syndicate rooms
- Simulated Hearing Centre and role play areas
- A range of learning resources including IT server and access to materials in every room.

Each year Hidden Hearing holds a number of ‘Open Days’ for prospective trainees to visit the Centre and to find out more about the education programme.

As a full-time employee of Hidden Hearing all aspects of your professional education and training programme are fully funded by the company. In addition you will receive a salary throughout your education programme.
Programme Overview

ACHIEVING THE AWARD IN ‘INDEPENDENT HEARING AID DISPENSING COMPETENCE’

WEEKS 1-9

You will be mostly based at the company Training Centre as a full time Trainee Hearing Aid Dispenser Monday to Friday. After initial training on topics including Health & Safety, Data Protection, Communication, Identifying Client Needs, Basic Anatomy of the Ear and Otoscopy, you will spend time in a Hearing Centre under the Direct Supervision of a Hearing Aid Dispenser interacting with clients, preparing the consulting room and practicing the skills learned in the classroom.

WEEKS 10-19

Following your first formal assessment you may be allowed to work with clients at a Hearing Centre or in the field while you further develop your dispensing skills. You will continue to have periods of time at the Training Centre for further sessions to consolidate your previous learning and then learn more about basic audiometric testing, basic hearing aid programming, maintenance and adjustment. You will also take a second assessment that may lead to your progression to Pre-Registered Dispenser level. During the Practice Placement sessions your Practice Educator will record your progress and competence development in a mandatory log-book.

WEEKS 20-58

Providing your competence development is on track and your logbook shows the right level of entries you will be allowed to work under ‘Indirect Supervision’ completing the full spectrum of dispenser activity under your Practice Educators delegated responsibility. You will usually have a diary of client appointments to see and you will be able to start developing your commercial practice selling hearing instruments.

EDUCATION MILESTONES

- Two months initial focused training residential away from home Monday to Friday.
- Working under delegated responsibility as an assistant from week 11.
- Pre-Registered Hearing Aid Dispenser status with own clients from week 27
- Final Exams in week 59
- Eligibility to apply for HCPC Registration in week 60

LOGBOOK PROCESS

Practice Educators and Educational Supervisors work with students to complete a logbook demonstrating 2400 hours of education and development. The logbook records areas of demonstrated competence that the student can practice with Indirect Supervision.
SUPERVISION

Direct – the Student and Practice Educator are physically together at the same place of practice.

Indirect – there is a requirement for the student and Practice Educator to be in contact not necessarily in the same physical practice.

HCPC REGISTRATION

Hidden Hearing Limited are unable to guarantee HCPC Registration. The training provided by the company is approved by the HCPC as meeting the minimum standards of education required for registration.

During your recruitment process Hidden Hearing will work with you to identify any areas that may later prevent or delay successful registration. Applicants must be aware that they have to apply for their own HCPC Registration and pay their own annual HCPC fees.

During this time you will spend an average of one to one and a half weeks per month at the Training Centre and the remaining time working under the delegated responsibility of your Practice Educator. During your structured training modules you will learn more about the psychology of hearing loss, further aspects of Audiological assessment, further hearing aid technology including fitting and adjustment, and a host of commercial and business skills.

Some of your formal structured training will be delivered by dispensers so that you can benefit from their experience.

WEEK 59

You will take your final written and practical assessments, which together with your trainee logbook will form the basis of the results for your final award. Achieving the ‘Award in Hearing Aid Dispensing Competence’ will provide you with eligibility to apply to the HCPC for Professional Registration. At this point you will have completed some 2400 hours of professional development, which in education terms is roughly the equivalent to a Foundation Degree.

WEEK 60

While awaiting for your HCPC professional registration, there will be a final commercial skills module and a company celebratory event to mark your achievement.
PROFESSIONAL BODY

In addition to the HCPC professional registration process Hidden Hearing requires that all Hearing Aid Dispensers are members of the Professional Body, The British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists. The education programme offered is designed to meet the standards of professional competence set out by the society.

Student membership gained at the start of the programme and renewed annually is free of charge up to the point of HCPC Registration. Thereafter a fee is payable together with the requirement to undergo Continual Professional Development.

Continuing Education and Professional Development

YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES THROUGH A REQUIREMENT FOR CPD.

CPD – CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

After Initial HCPC registration, subsequent renewal is conditional on completing an appropriate level of continuing professional development.

Hidden Hearing will arrange for you to attend a number of development events throughout the year that will meet the requirement for CPD. These events are held within normal working hours and are fully funded by the company. Additional events and seminars are also provided within the company as well as by BSHAA.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Hidden Hearing supports continued career development for all employees who have career aspirations.

There are clear routes to become a Team Leader and Ultimately an Area Manager or Operations Director. Roles are available based on the needs of the business, available vacancies and the skills, knowledge and expertise of the applicant.

Moving into another area of the business, for example training, is also possible.

FORMAL QUALIFICATION

Changes in the University education structure in 2012 mean that there is no longer a dedicated BSc or Masters Degree in Audiology. A Hearing Aid Dispenser wishing to use their Hidden Hearing Award as a step towards attaining their own formal qualification, e.g. A FdSc in Hearing Aid Audiology, can contact the Head of Development & Training to discuss the possible options, including support, available.
APPLICATION PROCESS

WHAT HIDDEN HEARING IS LOOKING FOR

You will need to possess a good standard of general education, and specific verbal and numeric capability. Preferably you will have GCSE’s or equivalent levels of certification in Math’s, English and Science or demonstrate attainment of suitable work related qualifications.

Applicants whose first language is not English will need to demonstrate the ability to communicate verbally, and to read and write in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5.

Aptitude tests will also be used, under the supervision of a British Psychological Society registered practitioner, for the purpose of identify a general training quotient score that will be compared to a Hidden Hearing ‘norm’ group. This indicator of ‘trainability’ is considered along with the job specific recruitment criteria.

You will also need to be computer literate, with a working knowledge of MS Windows systems including MS Outlook. You will also need a full and current driving license and a warm, personable manner with the ability to empathise with clients who have a hearing loss. A commercial outlook or sales experience will also be an advantage.

All applicants must submit a completed and signed Hidden Hearing Application Form. C.V.’s are acceptable methods of providing a detailed work history but must be accompanied by an application form.

The application form contains enhanced questions regarding health and all previous convictions and formal cautions that may not be asked of other roles. There is a requirement to maintain high standards of personal as well as professional behaviour as a Registered Healthcare Professional. Applications for the role of a Trainee Hearing Aid Dispenser must be checked against the DBS Vetting and Barring list as clients are considered vulnerable members of the community and offers or contracts are conditional upon your ability to meet the professional requirements for the role, including those of the HCPC as the professional regulator.
HOW WILL MY APPLICATION BE PROGRESSED

Applicants submitting documentation that satisfies the initial job requirement will receive an invitation to a recruitment open day event. The event will last for a whole day and will be held at the Hidden Hearing Training Centre in Buxton, Derbyshire. Accommodation is provided at no charge for applicants with long journeys however travel and other expenses are not paid. Refreshments are provided throughout the day.

During the day applicants will have a good opportunity to explore the Training Centre, the accommodation and to meet members of Hidden Hearing.

We would expect that applicants attending the open day event would have found out a little about Hidden Hearing however the full details of the profession and the training will be presented on the day.

Following a number of open day events, applicants will be shortlisted for second interview.

Second interviews are usually held in a Hearing Centre or Hotel locally to the applicants address. They are conducted by the Area Manager who will make the final decision regarding recruiting the applicant into their area.

Travel expenses are paid, on request, for second interviews, which will usually last 1-2 hours. Applicants are also welcome to make themselves known to their local Hearing Centre and arrange an informal conversation with the Hearing Aid Dispenser based there.

Successful applicants will receive a formal job offer and contract approximately 5-6 weeks before the start of the programme.

Please contact the HR team; contact details are on the previous page, to find out the dates for the next recruitment and the current salary and benefits package on offer.
OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities to join the programme are based on the operational needs of the business at the time.

We will not knowingly appoint a trainee in an area unless we have a business requirement for additional Hearing Aid Dispenser resource in that area and a Hearing Centre and Practice Educator who can support the trainee. As a result, unsuccessful applicants are welcome to apply on another occasion as the resource needs of the business areas change.

Hidden Hearing operates equal opportunity policies, copies of which are available on request and are included within the company handbook issued to all new employees along with their terms and conditions.

Hidden Hearing may also have opportunities for other roles. We offer BSHAA approved Hearing Care Assistant Training that offers a step up to the full Hearing Aid Dispenser programme.

We welcome applications from Registered Hearing Aid Dispensers and from those who have completed BSc (hons) Audiology or other profession specific qualifications. In these instances we will meet with an individual to determine which elements of their previous education or experience can provide exemption from parts of the Hidden Hearing programme.
AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENT HEARING AID DISPENSER APPLICANTS

As part of your research in preparation for your recruitment into the Independent Hearing Sector, you may find the following links a useful reference:

Health & Care Professions Council, www.hpc-uk.org
British Society of Hearing Aid Audiology www.bshaa.com
www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk
The British Society of Audiology, www.thebsa.org.uk
William Demant www.demant.com/about.cfm
The Ida Institute http://idainstitute.com

Thank you for requesting this information and for your interest in the Independent Hearing Profession and specifically in working with Hidden Hearing.

We look forward to reviewing your application and to perhaps meeting or working with you in the future.

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