

# Terms of Reference

**Responsible to:** SQC Director

**Accountable to:** Board of Directors

**BACKGROUND:** The Audiology Supplies Group (ASG) is a specialist group, which is responsible for the development and maintenance of protocols, standards and evaluation procedures for hearing aids, implantable devices and associated accessories, equipment and software for use in the NHS specifically via NHS Supply Chain. The aim is to ensure value for money and access to high quality technology.

ASG is a team within the British Academy of Audiology, and is therefore governed by the rules and regulations as set out within the BAA constitution.

**PURPOSE:** Contracted as an agent of the BSA, NHS Supply Chain (NHSSC) hold the National Framework agreement for the procurement of Hearing aids for the NHS. This includes a robust strategy and specification for the Hearing Aids and Accessories Framework. The ASG, supports, collaborates and develops the tender specification and evaluation criterion, including product evaluation in conjunction with NHSSC.

**MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS:** The membership of this group should represent a geographical spread as well as representation of the independent sector, which is contracted to undertake NHS work. The membership of the group must reflect the skill set required to undertake the evaluation of all equipment, software and aids as required. There is a requirement to co-opt specialist advice ( for cochlear implants as an example) at certain intervals.

Individuals must be full members of the BAA as defined by the BAA constitution.

## COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE:

**THE CHAIR:** The Chair will be chosen from within the committee and be agreed by the SQC Director. The Chair post will last for 2 years from appointment. If the ASG agrees, the Chair post can be renewed.

**OTHERS:** A maximum of 10 members of the core group, with representation of clinicians, NHS, commercial and academic professionals. An interested layperson should also be included whenever possible. On occasion, other professionals may be co-opted onto the group for a specific, time limited, task.

**QUORUM:** A 50% representation of the group will fulfill quorum, and decisions made at that meeting will stand.

**FUNDING:** The group will be funded as per below:

- Venue - Whenever possible, venues without charge will be sourced, and can include supplier venues. Where there is a charge associated with a venue, this will be funded by NHSSC in accordance with their internal processes.
- Subsistence: In accordance with BAA expenses claim policy, subsistence can be claimed when appropriate.
- Travel: In accordance with BAA expenses claim policy, travel expenses can be claimed when appropriate

- Time: All time given to ASG work is on a voluntary basis, and is within the remit of professional development within employment.

#### FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS:

The Team will meet quarterly. The meetings can be face-to-face or via an electronic method. The decision on which method to be used will be agreed within the committee for each meeting.

The Chair will be responsible for:

- Collating and distributing an agenda prior to the meeting
- Ensuring the activities of the ASG is reported to the Chair and Board Director for SQC
- Ensuring a member of the ASG team takes notes, which are first approved by the Chair, and then circulated to all members and to the SQC Director

The ASG will:

- Be accountable for and wholly impartial in its actions and decisions
- Develop, maintain and disseminate a minimum technical specification for hearing instruments, implantable devices, associated accessories, equipment supplied via the National Health Service (NHS) and any related software
- Evaluate such devices against such minimum technical specification, to ensure they meet the standards required
- Evaluate accompanying software to ensure that it is fit for purpose
- Provide ongoing support to the BAA membership. This group will have a wide range of skills and knowledge, with particular regard to specialist areas, such as BAHA, Cochlear Implant and FM. The representative group will undertake adhoc evaluations and have input into the development of the minimal technical specification as required
- Ensure all stakeholders (ie manufacturers and suppliers, purchasers, CCGs, DH) are aware of the ASG and the services it offers
- Provide documentation and methodologies to measure a minimum technical specification, as and when aids are due to come onto contract
- Provide appropriate reports to stakeholders detailing the results of an evaluation in a format appropriate to the individual stakeholder (eg BAA, NHSSC and Supplier/Manufacturer)
- Offer a minimum technical specification to suppliers of hearing aids to the NHS
- Provide a minimum technical specification for those commissioning NHS hearing aid services
- Provide a minimum technical specification to organisations providing NHS hearing aid services
- Publicise widely the minimum technical standard for hearing aids that is approved by BAA
- Undertake ad hoc evaluations of hearing aids between major contract update points. The maximum number of these evaluations per quarter will be decided on by the team

Additional Activities:

- The ASG is authorised to undertake contract-point evaluations of hearing aids if clear mechanisms to cover any additional costs are identified prior to assessment
- The ASG will provide training to any member asked to undertake evaluations on its behalf
- If these activities are required, it is the responsibility of the chair to ensure the work is completed within the given time frame and the protocol for evaluation is followed
- Any additional work requested should be reported to the Board of Directors, via the SQC Board Director

#### Confidentiality

As a key function of the group is to evaluate new technology, it is recognised that the members will be party to commercially sensitive information. As such all members (and those co-opted at any time) will be required to complete both non-disclosure agreements and declaration of interest forms.