

# Celebrating 25 years of the British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA)

**Simon Blake** shares an overview of the history of BAEA

The following gives a taste of the educational audiological atmosphere in the UK in November 1997 in an article which was entitled Educational Audiology in the UK and appeared in the BATOD magazine and the British Society of Audiology (BSA) News.

*"In the last four years there has been a groundswell of opinion amongst Educational Audiologists (EA) that the profession has been underrepresented in terms of a lack of local interest groups and a national professional society. The desire to promote the profession has led to the formation of four local groups in England: Northwestern Educational Audiology group (NWEAG), Midlands Educational Audiology group (MEAG), Northeastern Educational Audiology group (NEEAG) and the Southern Educational Audiology (SEAG). The culmination of these recent developments occurred on June 11th 1997 when the first national meeting of Educational Audiologists and the launch of the British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA) took place at the Birmingham School of Education, Birmingham University. This event was widely supported by 144 delegates..."*

Familiar names of those who spoke at the conference were Professors John Bamford, Kevin Munro and Wendy McCracken.

Simon Blake agreed to chair the new organisation and he put together a committee who, at the very start, met in his home village of Frisby on the Wreake in Leicestershire because of its convenient location almost exactly in the centre of England.

One of the primary tasks of the new organisation was to find out about the actual numbers of EA in the UK and their roles with

LEAs. The BATOD survey in 1998 had shown that the total number of QToDs with an 'audiology qualification' in schools and services was 84 but a total of only 68 actually employed as Educational Audiologists. The BAEA were



Wendy McCracken (Manchester University) and John Ellwood (Ed Aud, Cumbria and BAEA Chair 2005-2007)



Sue Archbold (Nottingham CI Programme), Peter Grayson (Ed Aud Sheffield), Mary Hostler (Manchester University), John Ellwood (Ed Aud Cumbria), Mike Kell (Independent Educational Consultant)



children in 1997, the Department of Health in England commissioned a national programme of newborn hearing screening in 2001 and has linked a systematic evaluation to the first 23 sites in the implementation of that policy. It is anticipated that all areas of England will participate in the programme by 2004/2005."

Naturally, the BAEA was interested in the way that this development would affect education services and commissioned a survey entitled *UNHS Habilitation* in May 1999 in order to find out how aware of this development they were and, more importantly, to gauge whether they felt able to work

therefore keen to conduct their own surveys although this often required following up poor response rates.

It also became clear from a survey carried out in October 1999 that EA, depending on which region they were employed in, were being asked to carry out very differing duties. Thus, early on in its existence the BAEA put together their Role & Competences document with the first edition appearing in 2001 in order to (a) create a clear perception of the role of the EA in the UK and (b) impress local education authorities that EA were very much needed within schools and services for hearing-impaired children. This achievement was one of the first major milestones of the BAEA. Gary Webster (Chair of BAEA 2011–2015) took on a review of this document during his tenure and recalls: "This was a major challenge and involved consulting with all the regional groups and took two years to complete the task."

The work culminated in the presentation at the 2014 BAEA Conference by Gary and Joy Rosenberg (Course Leader Mary Hare) and their paper was unsurprisingly entitled *The Role of The Educational Audiologist*.

During the last 25 years three separate strands of development were occurring which were to influence the audiological landscape of the UK enormously in the future: Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening and the development of cochlear Implants and digital hearing aids.

Following the well-known paper by Davis et al. in 1997, *A critical review of the role of neonatal hearing screening in the detection of congenital hearing impairment*, Adrian Davis and Sally Hind stated:

"Following a systematic review of the role of neonatal hearing screening in the identification of hearing impaired and deaf

with extremely young children. One of the findings showed that only 64 per cent of services had supported children under three months and under. There was thus an enormous necessity for training in this area.

As neonatal screening began to become a reality and to have an impact on services, it was felt necessary to examine closely the roles of both EA and ToD and so the title of our fourth national conference on 29th June 2001 was *Unpacking good practice for the under twos: a practical guide to working with very young children*.

Prof Kevin Munro recalled very recently: "My move to Manchester coincided with quite an important period in paediatric audiology with the roll out of newborn hearing screening, the first national universal programme in the world. As a result, the typical age at hearing aid fitting in



Peter Keen



Peter talking to Chris Cartwright and Rob Taylor from Phonak

children with permanent congenital hearing impairment has dramatically reduced from typically around one year of age to around two months.”

Apart from the organisation of yearly conferences one of the main aims of the BAEA was then (and still is) to act as a platform for communication amongst members and a wider audience of QToDs, Heads of Service and those working alongside EA in the health service. Two photos (included in the article show) show some speakers at the conferences of October 2004 and October 2005: see below for their names. They were entitled *Keeping Education in Educational Audiology and Evaluating children’s progress in education and audiology respectively*.

During the early years of the BAEA we were invited to attend the National Committee of Professionals in Audiology (NCPA) meeting, mostly in London, which provided a good overview of all current audiological developments. The British Society of Audiology provided the organising and minute taking of the NCPA and all organisations/societies in the UK involved with hearing impairment were invited. Sadly, the NCPA is no longer.

Paediatric cochlear implantation had been introduced to the UK in the 1980s, and by 1988 the British Cochlear Implant Group had been formed. British Cochlear Implant Group (BCIG) successfully lobbied the Department of Health in order to fund implantation and in 1990 bids were invited for a three-year centrally funded programme. Between 2006 and 2011 the figures show that 74 per cent of estimated eligible children aged 0–3 years received implants and 94 per cent by the age of 17.

Implants were at first only unilateral and the importance of bilateral hearing could no longer be overlooked. Peter Keen (BAEA Chair 2007–2011) recalls his letter to NICE in August 2008 in which he strongly emphasises the case

*“I make a strong plea that prelingually deaf children should have bilateral cochlear implantation where this is medically appropriate.”*

The roll out of cochlear implantation for young deaf children had an enormous impact on education services and in particular the improvement in language development of profoundly deaf children but for EA who were dealing with the compatibility of cochlear implants with radio systems there was even more of a challenge.

In BAEA Newsletter No 1 (Dec 1998) John Chadderton discusses the Spectra 22, Sprint 24 and Esprit processors and the fact that early models of the Esprit could not be used with FM radio systems at all.

Motivating all EA and completely at the heart of their work is the maxim: “helping children to hear better in all settings”. This entails a great deal of work fitting and maintaining radio aid systems and studying the acoustic environment of the child.

As new models of digital hearing aid and radio systems were produced, compatibility issues arose constantly and education services in these early days of development were spending a disproportionate amount of time repairing radio systems and /or making their linkage to hearing aids and cochlear implants more secure. The necessity for training and updating as manufacturers produced new systems was in great need and the four local Educational Audiology groups in the UK were invaluable in promoting very significant amounts of time in training and discussion for EA, QToDs and Technicians. It is generally felt that now, reliability and compatibility issues have improved.

Running parallel to the formation and growth of BAEA was (and is) the postgraduate course in Educational Audiology under Hertfordshire University being run at Mary Hare Grammar School, Newbury. This is the only course in Educational Audiology in the UK and possibly Europe at the time of writing and it underpins and maintains our profession by producing EA from its students. Joy Rosenberg has led the course for many years and has also had a long-standing role on the BAEA’s NEC committee as Training Officer. The very close relationship of BAEA and the course has been of enormous benefit to both organisations and very significant developments have evolved because of it.

Probably the BAEA’s most epic achievement in 2018 has been the Professional Registration for EAs. Of necessity this included accreditation of the course by the British Academy of Audiology (BAA) on behalf of the UK’s Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists (RCCP).



Simon Blake

This not only enhances the profession's public credibility but it brings with it the strengths of enforcing high standards of practice and maintaining a public database of registrants for six disciplines. New graduates of the course will be automatically eligible to register and others can

### References

1. Blake S (1997). *Educational Audiology in the UK*. BATOD Association Magazine and BSA News
2. Davis A, Bamford J, Wilson I, Ramkalawan T, Forshaw M, Wright S (1997). 'A critical review of the role of neo natal hearing screening in the detection of congenital hearing impairment'. *Health Technology Assessment* 1997 1 (10)
3. Davis A and Hind S (2003). 'The Newborn Hearing Screening Programme in England'. *Paediatric Otorhinolaryngology*, Dec 2003
4. Chadderton J (1988). *Cochlear Implants and FM Radio Systems*. BAEA Newsletter No 1 (Dec 1998)
5. Tolland, R (1999). *BAEA survey UNHS Habilitation May 1999*. BAEA Newsletter No 3 (March/April 2000).

apply via the equivalency process.

The Educational Audiology course has changed and adapted very well to circumstances such as decreasing numbers and Covid-19 and it is very pleasing to note that modules are now available as part of the BAA Higher Training Scheme for Paediatric Habilitation along with many stand-alone modules. This has allowed increased enrolment and currently the course has its highest ever enrolment for two years running.

Finally, under our new Chair Teresa Quail, a new group (WINSEAG) has been formed very recently which covers an area where EA are very thin on the ground, so it is very welcome indeed: in Wales, Ireland North and Scotland.

It would not be appropriate to celebrate 25 years without recognition of those Chairs who have had primary roles in developing the BAEA.

They are listed below:

- |    |              |               |
|----|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | Simon Blake  | 1997–2001     |
| 2. | Brian Barney | 2001–2005     |
| 3. | John Ellwood | 2005–2007     |
| 4. | Peter Keen   | 2007–2011     |
| 5. | Gary Webster | 2011–2015     |
| 6. | Helen Maiden | 2015–2019     |
| 7. | Jane North   | 2019–2021     |
| 8. | Teresa Quail | 2021–present. |



*Simon Blake is a founding member of BAEA and is currently Membership Secretary, Treasurer and Data Protection Officer.*

## Newsletters

BATOD publishes a newsletter at least twice a term via Mailchimp.



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If not, please contact Paul Simpson or Teresa Quail via [exec@batod.org.uk](mailto:exec@batod.org.uk)

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## BATOD Training Bursary Information

BATOD has launched a new Training Bursary to support professionals working with D/deaf learners who are not QToDs or ToDs in training.

This bursary allows BATOD members to access education/training related to deaf education, to develop their skills and knowledge. The member would be otherwise totally self-funding, due to no financial support from their educational establishment or LA.

Download this document for further information and the application form:

[www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BATOD-Training-bursary-information-pdf](http://www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BATOD-Training-bursary-information-pdf)

Any questions – contact Jill Bussien via [bursary@batod.org.uk](mailto:bursary@batod.org.uk)



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