From workplaces to festivals: UK hearing experts call for a new approach to protecting hearing

Tuesday 20 October, 2026

The changing way people work, listen to music and experience noise will be the focus of the UK Hearing Conservation Association (UKHCA) Annual Conference, taking place in Manchester on 3 November.

Organised by UKHCA in collaboration with the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS), UKHCA 2026: Hearing Conservation – Making an Impact will bring together experts from regulation, occupational health, audiology, academia and industry, to explore how hearing health can be better protected across workplaces and everyday life.

The conference comes as attention increasingly shifts from simply identifying noise exposure to preventing hearing damage through better risk management, effective hearing protection, health surveillance and greater public awareness.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will provide an update on its new workplace noise campaign, including the regulator's priorities and what these mean for organisations managing occupational noise.

The conference programme will also look beyond traditional workplace exposure. Experts will explore the effects of recreational noise on young people's hearing, how to engage Gen Z with hearing protection, and the implementation of the World Health Organization's Global Standard for Safe Listening at music venues and events.

Other sessions will examine hearing protection effectiveness and the impact of training, occupational health and audiology practice, safe noise exposure for hearing aid users, noise risk management and return on investment, and how case law has shaped claims for hearing damage.

The wider consequences of hearing loss will also be considered, including research examining the association between hearing impairment and depression among older adults.

Clare Forshaw, Founder and Director of UKHCA, said:

"Protecting hearing is about much more than measuring noise and handing out hearing protection. We need to understand how people are exposed to sound, how they use protection, how we identify hearing damage early and, most importantly, how we encourage people to value their hearing before it is affected.

"This year's programme brings together workplace noise, public health, research and real-world experience because preventing hearing damage requires all of those perspectives."

The conference will feature contributions from organisations including HSE, RNID, the British Society of Audiology, the Ministry of Defence and Tinnitus UK, alongside researchers from UK and international universities.

For the first time, the conference will also include the UKHCA Hearing Conservation Champions Awards, recognising individuals and organisations making a positive contribution to hearing conservation.

Professor Kevin Bampton, CEO of the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS), said:

"Noise-induced hearing damage is preventable, but prevention depends on moving beyond compliance and treating hearing as something worth protecting throughout people's working and wider lives.

"The strength of UKHCA is that it brings together disciplines that do not always sit in the same room – occupational hygiene, audiology, acoustics, occupational health, research and regulation. That collaboration is essential if we want to turn what we know about hearing conservation into better prevention in practice."

For the full programme and to book your place, visit the UKHCA 2026 conference page.

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