



# The Hearing House

## Privacy Policy Statement

### Introduction

This privacy policy explains how The Hearing House (referred to as "us," "our," or "we") collects, stores, uses, and shares personal information about you or your child (for children under 16).

We aim to be clear and transparent about our privacy practices. According to the Privacy Act 2020 and the Health Information Privacy Code 2020, we must inform you how we handle personal information. You can trust us to respect and protect this information.

Here are the main points of our policy:

- We only collect personal information necessary for our services (like audiology, therapy, fundraising, research, and communication).
- We gather this information directly from you or other authorised sources (like your GP or health board).
- We may create additional personal information as we provide our services.
- We store all data, including personal information, on a secure local server, locked medical files, and in Microsoft SharePoint/OneDrive on our premises. We take strong measures to protect this data.
- You can request a copy of your or your child's personal information anytime. We strive to be open while complying with privacy laws.
- We only use and share personal information when necessary for our services or if required by law.

If you have any questions or concerns about how we manage your or your child's personal information, contact us.

This policy will be updated as needed to reflect changes in the law. This version is from **October 2024.**

### **Information Collection, Use, and Sharing**

To provide our services, we need to collect information. Some of this information may be sensitive. We also collect information about donations made or if you join in communications initiatives or fundraising events, like Loud Shirt Day.



## **Collecting information from you directly**

Most of the information we collect is provided directly by you or your authorised representative. This starts when you ask about or sign up for our services and continues during your appointments.

You don't have to give us your or your child's personal information. However, without it, we may not be able to provide our services effectively, like audiology services.

Here's the kind of personal information we may collect from you:

- Your name and/or your child's name
- Your contact details, like your address, email, and phone number
- Your or your child's NHI number
- Information about your authorised representative (if needed)
- Details about your or your child's eligibility for publicly funded health services (if needed)
- Your permission to take part in marketing, fundraising, or research
- Your or your child's answers to questionnaires and audiological tests, including demographic information for research
- Your feedback on satisfaction surveys (which you can choose to complete anonymously)

Some of this personal information may be requested by government ministries for auditing, reporting, and statistical purposes.

## **Collecting Information from Other People or Agencies**

To give you or your child the best audiology and therapy services, we need to get information from other agencies. This usually happens when they refer you to us and have already received your permission, or if you give us their information and allow us to collect it.

We may collect personal information from these sources:

- General health practitioners, so your GP
- Departments within local health boards (like Audiology, Ear Nose and Throat, Genetics, Radiology, and Paediatric records)
- Government Ministries, for example, the Ministries of Education, Health, of Disabled People
- Ko Taku Reo
- Hearing aid and cochlear implant manufacturers (like Phonak and Cochlear Limited)
- Immigration NZ (to confirm your legal residency)
- Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)



## **Information We Create While Providing Services**

When we provide services to you or your child, we create personal information. This may include:

- Clinic notes
- Correspondence (like letters and emails), including messages between our staff or with other agencies
- Assessment reports, progress reports, and test results

## **What We Do with Your Personal Information**

To provide the right services for you or your child, we use personal information in the following ways. If we ever use the information in ways that were not expected, we will follow the Privacy Act 2020 and The Health Information Privacy Code 2020.

We will use personal information to:

- Determine the best assistive listening device for you or your child (like a hearing aid or cochlear implant) and recommend it to our funder, the Northern Cochlear Implant Trust (NCIT), or other funding agencies (like ACC or private insurance).
- Monitor your or your child's progress with the assistive listening device, using information from audiograms, speech tests, and standard language assessments.
- Set long- and short-term goals for your child.
- Create a rehabilitation plan (for adults only).
- Review and improve our services, including conducting satisfaction surveys.
- Carry out internal statistical analysis and meet our reporting needs (like those for Government ministries)
- Run marketing or fundraising campaigns, like Loud Shirt Day. This may involve sharing information on social media, but only if we have your permission.

## **Information Sharing Policy**

We may share personal information about you or your child to:

**Provide Services:** Necessary for the effective delivery of services.

**Research Purposes:** With your informed consent.

**Legal Obligations:** When required by law, particularly concerning child welfare.



The people and organisations we may share personal information with include:

**Funding Agencies:** Such as NCIT, ACC, Cochlear Limited, Phonak, and Enable New Zealand.

**Healthcare Professionals:** Including doctors/GPs, Advisers of Deaf Children, Resource Teachers of the Dea, paediatricians, ENT specialists, audiologists, Hearing Life Therapists, and Gillies Hospital staff.

**Child Welfare Reporting:** We are legally required to report to Oranga Tamariki or the New Zealand Police if there are concerns about a child's

## Research Database

The Hearing House operates a Cochlear Implant Research Database (the Database) as a resource to enhance our cochlear implant services. We aim to increase awareness and support individuals with hearing loss. Participation in the Database is entirely your choice (or your choice on behalf of a child under 16).

## Purpose and Use of Data

The effectiveness of the Database relies on the diversity and volume of data it contains. If you consent to your, or your child's, personal information being used in our Database (using our consent form), we may:

- **Collect Personal Information:** use the personal information you provide in your enrolment consent form, as well as any additional information we request or that you share with us while providing our services.
- **Research Applications:** conduct research using your or your child's information for purposes such as:
  - Understanding the impact of hearing loss on development and aging.
  - Investigating factors that may affect hearing loss.
  - Developing new insights into services and technology that assists hearing and communication.

All research outcomes will be published in an anonymised or aggregated form, ensuring that you or your child cannot be identified by anyone outside of The Hearing House.

- **Data Sharing:** We may share your or your child's information with third parties (including researchers) who assist us in our research efforts. Access to the Database is restricted to a "need to know" basis, and all third parties undergo rigorous vetting and are bound by strict privacy, confidentiality, and security obligations.
- **Data Retention:** Your or your child's information will be retained in the Database for the duration of your or your child's natural life and beyond (e.g., after death).



We will de-identify all information before publishing any research, assigning a unique identifier to ensure that individuals cannot be identified by those outside of The Hearing House.

## How we handle your personal information

Here is a summary of how we handle your personal information:

**Data Storage:** We store electronic data, including personal information, on secure on-site servers and use Microsoft SharePoint/OneDrive. Access is limited to authorised staff, and all data is password protected.

**Paper Records:** Personal information is also kept in individual paper files stored in a locked and alarmed room after hours.

**Applications:** We use Microsoft Office for email and productivity tasks, and our clinical scheduling is managed through an online booking system called Cloud Appointments.

**Data Transfer:** Some of your personal information may be transferred to or accessed from countries outside of New Zealand by our service providers.

We are committed to protecting your information and ensuring its confidentiality.

## Security

We take all reasonable steps to protect your personal information from loss, unauthorised access, disclosure, and misuse. We also ensure that our third-party data processors comply with our privacy and security standards.

## Your Privacy Rights and How to Contact Us

Under the Privacy Act, you have the right to access and correct the personal information we hold about you. You can also control how we use your information, including whether you wish to be contacted about research or fundraising activities.

To exercise these rights, please reach out to us in any of the following ways:

- **Email:** [clinicalservices@hearinghouse.co.nz](mailto:clinicalservices@hearinghouse.co.nz)
- **Phone:** 0800 254 783
- **Mail:** PO BOX 74022, Greenlane, Auckland 1546

We are here to help you with any requests regarding access to or correction of your information.



## **Your Rights Regarding Personal Information**

You have the right to confirm if we hold your personal information and to request access to it, whether we collected it directly from you or from someone else. If you believe your information is incorrect, you can ask us to correct it and specify what changes you want.

We will process your request as quickly as possible, and no later than 20 working days after we receive it. In some cases, we may need to withhold certain information as permitted under sections 27-29 of the Privacy Act, but we will do this only when necessary.

## **Opting Out of Certain Uses**

You can choose not to have your personal information used in specific ways, based on the consent you provide when you or your child enrolls with our service. For example, you can opt out of being contacted about research projects or having your images or stories used for media and fundraising. You can withdraw or update your consents at any time.

## **Complaining About Our Privacy Practices**

If you have concerns about our privacy practices, please contact us first, and we will do our best to resolve the issue.

You also have the right to complain to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. For more information, please visit [Privacy Commissioner Complaints](#).