

Agenda Item 12

Enclosure 8

**Health and Care Professions Council
22 May 2019**

Online information on meeting our standards

For approval

From Katherine Timms, Head of Policy

Online information on meeting our standards

Executive Summary

This paper sets out how we:

- propose managing the increase in enquiries, by ensuring responses to frequent topics are available to all our registrants;
- propose providing additional advice and support on topics we understand to be particularly complex; and
- will ensure we continue to meet our statutory obligations.

Previous consideration	This paper has been discussed at an SMT meeting.
Purpose of report	The Council is asked to discuss and agree the proposed approach.
Next steps	We will identify key areas requiring content development and progress through appropriate governance mechanisms, as outlined above.
Strategic priority	Strategic priority 2: Ensure our communication and engagement activities are proactive, effective and informed by the views of our stakeholders.
Risk	Strategic risk 3. Failure to be a trusted regulator and meet stakeholder expectations The risk appetite for communication is 'open'
Financial and resource implications	The resource implications for this work have been included in the Policy and Standards work plan and budget. There are no financial implications for this work.
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Online information on meeting our standards

Introduction

The Policy and Standards team have seen a significant increase in the volume of enquiries received over recent years; from an average of ~35 per month in 2016 to ~100 per month in 2019.

This paper sets out how we:

- propose managing the increase in enquiries, by ensuring responses to frequent topics are available to all our registrants;
- propose providing additional advice and support on topics we understand to be particularly complex; and
- will ensure we continue to meet our statutory obligations.

We are mindful that our approach needs to fulfil our statutory obligations, and enable Council and key stakeholders to have appropriate oversight.

Article 3(14) of the Health and Social Work Professions Order 2001¹ sets out:

‘Before establishing any standards or giving any guidance under this Order the Council shall consult representatives of any group of persons it considers appropriate including, as it sees fit, representatives of—

- (a) registrants or classes of registrant;
- (b) employers of registrants;
- (c) users of the services of registrants; and
- (d) persons providing, assessing or funding education or training for registrants or prospective registrants.’

Whilst this outlines the requirement to consult on guidance, we have sought legal advice which has confirmed this does not necessarily need to be a public consultation; but should be considered on a case by case basis, according to need. This could include small scale engagement with key stakeholders, where appropriate.

¹ <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/legislation/orders/consolidated-health-and-social-work-professions-order-2001/>

Current information online

In order to support understanding of our Standards, particularly in response to areas in which we receive high volumes of enquiries, we have recently developed the following information pages:

- [Record keeping](#)
- [Scope of practice](#)
- [Providing online services](#)
- [Meeting our Standards FAQs page](#) where we answer questions from registrants on more isolated topics that do not yet warrant their own page. Currently this includes questions about supervision and dual registration.

We also have developed [Information on when and how to make a self-referral](#), which formed part of the People like us? Action Plan. This was developed following stakeholder engagement, and was approved by SMT.

In the future, we are planning to develop more web based information. Plans include information on reflective practice, following recommendations from the Williams Review, and the duty of candour, in light of the PSA's recent report on the subject. We also are going to be producing online materials for education providers and learners, which also stems from the 'People like us?' action plan.

The advantages of this approach

Increased responsiveness

By developing information informally and frequently, this allows us to be more agile and responsive to external policy changes.

Increased capacity in the Policy and Standards team

Putting information online that we would otherwise share through enquiries allows us to focus the resources in the Policy and Standards team to only those enquiries which are more complex or warrant additional research and consideration.

Alignment with our Strategic priorities

Providing information of this kind aligns with Strategic priority 2, which is about working with our stakeholders to deliver activities which improve understanding of our standards and the importance of professionalism.

Proposed approach

In light of this, and following legal advice, we propose adopting the following model for public facing content produced by the Policy and Standards department:

1. **FAQs:** to be adopted where content is generally signposting to existing standards and guidance. In this instance, we would only engage stakeholders on content where necessary, and content approval would be through SMT.
2. **Online information:** to be adopted where more detailed information is required to support registrants' understanding of how to adopt HCPC Standards and guidance. We would seek to engage key stakeholders (internal and/or external) on draft content, which would typically be approved by SMT. It may also be approved through Council where SMT consider it necessary.
3. **Standards, Policy and Guidance:** would continue to be developed following approval from SMT, ETC and Council, and would engage a public consultation. Guidance in this context would cover key, more contentious areas, such as confidentiality.

We will continue to seek legal advice on all public facing content.