

Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Care Professions Council held in public as follows:

Date: Thursday 17 July 2025

Time: 10am

Venue: HCPC Offices, Kennington, London

Present: Christine Elliott (Chair)

Alice Gair*
Helen Gough (by Microsoft Teams)
Helen Grantham
John McEvoy
Sejal Patel*
Lianne Patterson
David Stirling
Carl Stychin
Kathryn Thirlaway

Apologies: Rebekah Eglinton
Pameleta Ricketts
Catharine Seddon
Valerie Webster

In attendance:

Bola Ademuyiwa, Learning and Development Specialist
Zoe Allan, Business Manager, Chair and Chief Executive Office
Claire Amor, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs
Zoe Arkah, Work Experience Student
Carla Brown CEO, Oakemere Wealth and President, Personal Finance Society
Francesca Bramley, Governance Manager
Alastair Bridges, Executive Director of Resources
Gareth Davies, Head of Insight and Analytics
Laura Coffey, Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services
Carmel Gayle, Work Experience Student
Colette Higham, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Professional Standards Authority
Jamie Hunt, Head of Education
Breanna Latty, Work Experience Student
Nyasha Mandiveyi, Registration Advisor
Patricia Morrissey, Head of Governance

Dave Munday, Lead Professional Officer from Unite
Ife Ojo, Commercial Business Partnering Manager
Bernie O'Reilly, Chief Executive
Kayleigh Parker, Internal Communications and Engagement Manager
Matthew Peck, Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs
Andrew Smith, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education,
Registration and Regulatory Standards
Kate Steele, Partner, Capsticks LLP
Dabbi Taylor, Education and Training Committee Student Representative

Unconfirmed

Public meeting

1 Chair's welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting of Council, including a number of observers who were invited to introduce themselves by the Chair.

1(a) Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Rebekah Eglinton, Pameleta Ricketts, Catharine Seddon, and Valerie Webster.

1.2 The meeting was declared quorate.

1(b) Approval of agenda

1.3 The Council approved the agenda.

1(c) Declaration of members' interests in relation to agenda items

1.4 The Council noted:

- Kathryn Thirlaway's recent appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost for Learning and Teaching at Cardiff Metropolitan University, from 1 July 2025 and;
- Rebekah Eglinton's appointment as an Associate Clinical Non Executive Director of the Devon Partnership NHS Trust.

1.5 There were no further interests to declare from Council members related to specific agenda items.

1(d) Minutes of the Council meeting on 22 May 2025

1.6 The Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of its meeting held in public on 22 May 2025.

1(e) Matters arising

1.7 The Council noted the updates on the matters arising from previous meetings held in public, including the item proposed for closure regarding the number of registration appeals.

2 Chair's Report

2.1 The Council noted the Chair's report.

Performance reports

3 Chief Executive's Performance Report

3.1 The Chief Executive's performance report highlighted key areas of organisational performance and key developments in the reporting period since the Council's last meeting in May 2025.

3.2 The Council noted the report and the following points.

- The PSA had recently published its assessment of HCPC's performance between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, confirming that the HCPC had met 17 of the 18 Standards of Good Regulation. The assessment reflected the hard work and determination of HCPC colleagues over the preceding 3-4 years. HCPC colleagues continued to focus on meeting standard 15, the criteria for which were not exclusively related to the timeliness of processing fitness to practise cases. The HCPC had previously given feedback to the PSA on the application and scope of standard 15 and it was recognised that there would be no single means of resolving the challenges in meeting this standard.
- The publication on 3 July of the National Health's Service (NHS) 10-year plan for England and the central role of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) to an updated modern health service. The initial implications for the HCPC related to our standards and the proposed reduction of the NHS's dependence on overseas staff, which could impact the number of international registrants. Further updates would be provided to the Council, as required.
- The launch of the HCPC data hub had received well-deserved recognition from the Minister of State for Health. The data could be 'sliced and diced' from different viewpoints and would be key to informing the wider health and care sector to spot trends and to better understand the workforce across the UK, helping to support delivery of care.
- The consultation of the sanctions policy had launched on 29 May 2025 and would remain open until 1 September 2025.
- An update on the work underway to use AI across the HCPC had been shared at the recent Chief Executive Officers and Registrars Board meeting. In support of the move to using AI powered tools, the HCPC AI policy had been launched in July and aimed to ensure sensible parameters for its responsible and ethical use across the organisation.
- In relation to HCPC's core regulatory functions, the education team had completed planning for its performance monitoring review work with 31 education providers due for review in 2025-26.

- There had been a drop in the number of international applications to join the register which had resulted in an improvement in the time taken to assess applications. The team are on track to return to meeting our 60 day KPI by the end of July as forecast.
- A technical issue had arisen with the Business Central finance system that had resulted in the delay of the collection of direct debits for around 20,000 registrants due in July. The payments were expected to be taken on 1 August and all registrants impacted by the delay had been written to.
- The phased approach to the development of the next Corporate Strategy was underway with phase 1 of engagement to capture a wide range of views ongoing. 600 responses had been received so far to the external stakeholder survey which was due to close in the second week of August. An internal survey for HCPC colleagues was also live and was due to close w/c 21 July. Further patient engagements plans were in place. A paper on the development of the strategy would be considered by the Council at its next meeting in October 2025.

3.3 The Council sought clarity on the reference to 'cross-profession regulatory alignment in support of multi-disciplinary teams'. The Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education, Registration and Regulatory Standards clarified that there was a focus within the plan on 'train to task' rather than 'train to role' linked to how professions might be deployed to deliver what is required. The Council noted that the HCPC's remit of public protection was clear and that it would work with the DHSC to support delivery of the plan, and would welcome further detail in due course, including in relation to any relevant legislation. It was noted that the plan covered England only, and that there were different approaches to planning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

3.4 The Council welcomed the update on stakeholder engagement, and it was requested that an opportunity to meet with the Healthcare Science Leads Group in Scotland be extended to supplement the meetings already held with the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer and Chief Scientific Officer.

Action: Executive to seek opportunity to meet with the Chief Scientist Group in Scotland as part of regular stakeholder engagement plans.

4 Finance Report

4.1 The Council noted the finance report outlining the HCPC's financial performance year to date to May 2025.

4.2 The Executive Director of Resources highlighted the following points:

- the May 2025 full year forecast had changed from a small surplus to a projected deficit of £89k; the risks would be managed as set out in the report with regular reporting to the Performance and Resources Committee;

- the year-to-date actual deficit of £210k was lower than the May forecast deficit of £337k;
 - the shortfall in employee full time equivalents (FTEs) was related to vacant posts in central functions and not within FTP;
 - additional income from the fee rise that came into effect from April 2025 had been identified as proposed expenditure to address FTP capacity bottlenecks and process improvement;
 - the number of international applications received over the last 5 months had been lower than the cautious budget assumption and there were risks related to a further drop in levels if the average continued, although it was theoretically possible that there could be a spike in the number of applications later in the year as had occurred in 2023/24 and 2024/25;
 - the June finance report, incorporating a revised, in-depth income and expenditure forecast, and addressing the scope for further efficiencies, would be provided to Performance and Resources Committee (PRC) at its September 2025 meeting and the Council in October 2025.
- 4.3 In response to a question regarding the possible budget options if the rate of international registration applications did not increase, the Executive Director of Resources clarified that the application numbers would be reviewed in the autumn and that if they were still low there were options related to the direct costs of processing applications. It was also noted that reducing rates of spend in other areas to achieve short-term savings might not always be a good long term option and would require careful consideration.
- 4.4 The Executive Director of Resources set out the case for £419k additional spend to address capacity bottlenecks impacting on FTP timeliness and noted that additional temporary staff would be deployed into areas where processes were working well and that measures would be developed to monitor the impact of the additional spend. Most of the expenditure was non-recurrent. In parallel the business change team would work with FTP colleagues to support improved productivity and effectiveness.
- 4.5 In response to a query regarding the difference between using an over-programming approach and using fixed term contracts, the Executive Director of Resources explained that the overprogramming approach would involve a time limited period where additional staff were brought in above head count level on the expectation that over time through natural wastage there would be a return to original headcount. It was noted that there was some risk of the head count not returning to original levels but consistent trends in turnover would help ELT to manage the risk.
- 4.6 The Chief Executive noted that the Executive Leadership team had carefully considered the business case for the additional expenditure and was clear that it was not the answer to addressing PSA standard 15. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the additional investment would also be developed.

- 4.7 The Executive Director of Resources informed the Council that while the current financial position was tight prospects for the medium-term position remained manageable with further income from the current fee rise coming on stream in 2026/27. Planning for the next fee increase would commence on the basis of the agreed 2-year cycle and an initial proposal setting out the high-level projections would be considered by Council at its October meeting. It was noted that the requirement for consultation and Parliamentary approval of any fee increase gave rise to a long lead in time.
- 4.8 The Council:
- noted the budget position set out in the report, including the assessment of risks and opportunities;
 - approved the commitment of £419k of additional spend this year to address capacity bottlenecks impacting on FTP timeliness and noted that the ELT would monitor measures of the impact of the additional expenditure, and that the additional capacity would be accompanied by work to review FTP processes to improve further effectiveness, timeliness and productivity.
- 4.9 The Executive Director of Resources introduced the financial strategy which sets out how the HCPC would achieve financial sustainability, deliver value for money, and maintain financial controls. The draft strategy had been previously considered by the PRC at its meeting on 12 June and had been updated in light of its discussion, as required.
- 4.10 The Council welcomed the cautious, balanced and sensible approach set out in the strategy and supported the whole organisation approach to financial responsibility.
- 4.11 In response to a question as to whether it was realistic to expect that investments should grow at a rate higher than inflation within the constraints of a low-risk investment environment, the Executive Director of Resources confirmed that this was realistic and had been achieved over recent years via the active management of HCPC's bank deposits.
- 4.12 The Council approved the Financial Strategy.
- 4.13 The Executive Director of Resources introduced the procurement policy which had been updated to ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 (with effect in February 2025) and had been previously considered by the PRC and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC).
- 4.14 The Commercial Business Partnering Manager provided an overview of the key changes to the policy, including the creation of the policy as a standalone document separate from operational procedures and increasing the procurement threshold from £25k to £100k.

- 4.15 The Council noted that the internal control framework related to procurement was strong and that the process was well supported by a dedicated team with clear roles and responsibilities.
- 4.16 The Council approved the Procurement Policy.

Items for discussion/decision

5 Communications Strategy Update

- 5.1 The Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs provided an update on progress against the communications strategy agreed by Council in July 2024 and plans for future work. Key activity included:
- the successful CPD Week 2025 campaign focused on raising awareness of the importance of CPD, myth busting our audit requirements and promoting support for registrants;
 - raising awareness of our work to improve sexual safety and promote the support offered by the Professional Liaison team and new sexual safety hub;
 - a focus on increasing our communication in-house capability and reducing outsourced spend by 50% in 2025/26;
 - plans to upgrade and improve the HCPC website and embed it as the core access point for all our key audiences;
 - a planned refresh of our corporate brand to bring out the values, personality and confidence of the organisation more clearly.
- 5.2 In response to a question regarding insight into who was using our data, the Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs clarified that it was likely that the data hub was being visited by registrants but that it was difficult to confirm this as the hub was also promoted widely by professional bodies. Work was already being undertaken to build the understanding of our audiences across all communication channels. It was noted that HCPC webinars were well received and that reporting on this channel was currently through the Professional Liaison Team but could be included within the new communications dashboard, if required.
- 5.3 Council noted the confusion over professional titles highlighted by the Leng Review and that the HCPC 'would take reactive action as required to ensure the protection of the titles within its remit', as it had done recently with regard to psychologists. It was suggested that further consideration could be given to whether a more structured and specific format was required to ensure that there was clarity around the protected titles.

Action: The Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs to explore how a proactive programme to ensure clarity around the protected titles might work.

- 5.4 In response to questions regarding the expansion of the communications team and how fresh perspectives would be maintained, the Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs noted that existing measures to ensure external perspectives were working well, including regular interactions with the Professional Body Forum, planned stakeholder engagement and regular meetings with other healthcare regulators. With regard to the expansion of the team, recruitment had been phased to remain within budget and the final headcount was expected to be 13 and was consistent with the HCPC's commitment to operate as lean organisation.
- 5.5 The Council commended the progress to date and thanked the Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs for the draft communications report and live dashboard circulated ahead of the meeting.

Items for noting

6 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Education and Training Committee held in public on 4 June 2025

- 6.1 The Council noted this item.

7 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held in public on 11 June 2025

- 7.1 The Council noted this item.

8 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the People and Resources Committee held in public on 12 June 2025

- 8.1 The Council noted this item.

9 Annual summary of the Council committees 2024-2025

- 9.1 The Council noted the annual summary which was presented for the first time as agreed at the meeting of the Council and Committee Chairs on 23 September 2024. Committee Chairs highlighted that:
- the Education and Training Committee was now fully constituted following the appointment of the new independent committee member, Helen White, and the new Council member, Carl Stychin, and that further consideration would now be given to the balance of committee time spent on monitoring performance and contributing to future development;

- the finance team would be particularly busy in the period leading to the next ARAC meeting and focused on the audit of the annual accounts;
- the attendance of an employee forum representative at the next PRC meeting was encouraged, particularly as there had been no representation from them at the last 2 meetings owing to the non-availability on those dates of employee forum members.

9.2 The Governance Manager provided a brief overview of the paper which set out the items considered by each committee during 2024-25, confirmation that each committee had reviewed its standing orders in 2024-25; and an outline of the forward plan of business for each committee for the remainder of 2025.

10 Proposed Council and committee dates 2026

10.1 The Council noted this item and Council members were asked to flag any diary challenges to the Governance Team.

11 Council forward plan

11.1 The Council noted the forward plan which was provided at each meeting to ensure visibility of Council business and was updated as required when new items were agreed.

12 Council reflection

12.1 Dabbi Taylor (ETC student representative), provided his reflections of being neurodivergent in a professional environment and how the HCPC could become a more neuro-inclusive organisation. Dabbi reflected that feeling psychology safe in an environment was critical to allowing him to be able to be vulnerable and to be his authentic self. He noted that being given the platform to speak to the Council in safe space was a masterclass in demonstrating a willingness to walk the path of service together. Dabbi also shared his recent experiences of competency-based interviews as part of the NHS recruitment process and reflected on how a simple adjustment to allow a neuro-divergent candidate to view the interview questions 30 minutes in advance of the interview had a significant positive impact in allowing him to manage the challenges around auditory processing delay and effectively demonstrate his competency and skills for the role at the interview.

12.2 On behalf of the Council and those in attendance, the Chair of the Council thanked Dabbi for his impactful and moving insights.

13 Resolution

13.1 The Council resolved that the remainder of the meeting would be held in private, because the matters being discussed related to the following:

- (a) information relating to a registrant, former registrant or application for registration;

- (b) information relating to an employee or office holder, former employee or office holder or applicant for any post or office;
- (c) the terms of, or expenditure under, a tender or contract for the purchase or supply of goods or services or the acquisition or disposal of property;
- (d) negotiations or consultation concerning labour relations between the Council and its employees;
- (e) any issue relating to legal proceedings which are being contemplated or instituted by or against the Council;
- (f) action being taken to prevent or detect crime or to prosecute offenders;
- (g) the source of information given to the Council in confidence; or
- (h) any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, is confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Council's functions.

Item	Reason for Exclusion
12	H
13	H
14	H
15	G and H
16	H
17	H

The meeting was adjourned at 12.45pm.

Chair:

Date: