
Communications Committee Thursday 16 October 2008

Public Affairs and Stakeholder Report

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This report provides an update on public affairs and stakeholder activities undertaken since the last Communications Committee on 21 May 2008.

Decision

The Committee is requested to note the document. No decision is required.

Background information

Since the last report, the Public Affairs Manager has attended a number of meetings with various stakeholders, including:

Visits to Wales

- Participated in the Welsh Assembly Government seminar on regulation (with the Head of Policy and Standards). This included presentations from the Department of Health and General Medical Council (GMC). Good contact was made with representatives from professional bodies, regulators and those within the NHS.
- As a result, further meetings were set up which included a joint meeting with the Welsh officers from various professional bodies (the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, the College of Occupational Therapists and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy), the GMC and the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare.
- The next round of Cardiff meetings, including a meeting with the Welsh Assembly Government, Community Health Councils in Wales and the Care Council in Wales are scheduled for November.

Visits to Scotland

- Met with the Allied Health Professions Forum Scotland Chair (along with the Head of Policy and Standards), the Scottish Health Council, Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland and the Robert Gordon University.
- The HPC also exhibited at the 'Complaints Handling, Patient Feedback and Public Involvement: the new NHS management challenge' conference in Edinburgh in September. Contact was made with advocacy organisations that were presenting on the day including Citizens Advice Scotland (we subsequently supplied material for their case officer training day) and the NHS Complaints Personnel Association Scotland (the Chair

subsequently had a phone meeting with the Director of Fitness to Practise).

- Met with the Director of Training for Psychology Services at NHS Education Scotland, along with the CPD Communications Manager, to discuss working together on events to communicate with psychologists.
- Attended the Regulation of Healthcare Support Workers - 4 Country Steering Group meeting in Edinburgh to find out about the pilot's progress. Meeting was also to discuss the Scottish Government Regulation Events which will be held over two days at the end of October. The HPC will be attending and exhibiting as partners to this event.
- Met with contacts in Edinburgh of the BPS Scottish Division of Educational Psychology through the CPD Communications Manager, who was asked to speak at their AGM.

Other meetings with stakeholders

- Met with the Local Government Association public affairs and policy contact to discuss future work with local authorities and distribution of leaflets and HPC material.

Professional bodies

As part of our ongoing work with professional bodies on the renewals process, the Public Affairs Manager met with the following:

- The Chief Executive of the Society and College of Radiographers with the Director of Operations and Customer Service Managers from Registrations.
- Representatives from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy with the Director of Operations, Customer Service Managers from Registrations and the Head of Policy and Standards.
- The Professional Co-ordinator from the College of Operating Department Practitioners.

Parliamentarians

1) Political Party Conferences and the Health Hotel

Scotland

The HPC will be exhibiting at the Scottish National Party (SNP) Annual Conference for four days in mid-October and the Public Affairs Manager will be available to speak with key MSPs about the Section 60 legislation and our plans for bringing practitioner psychologists on to the register. Whilst at the SNP conference the HPC will have publications and information available at a joint Allied Health Professions Scotland Forum reception. The Public Affairs Manager also plans to attend the Scottish Labour Party Conference as a delegate in Dundee next March.

Northern Ireland

The HPC will be exhibiting at the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) party conference in Armagh, Northern Ireland on 1 November. As the largest party in Northern Ireland we thought it would be a good opportunity to promote the HPC's role as a UK wide regulator. We have been advised by other health regulators that the stands are a popular and cost effective way of direct engagement with other health organisations as well as public and patient interest groups.

Wales

The HPC hope to exhibit once again at the annual Welsh Labour Party conference. This will be held in Swansea next April. We hope to link in with some of the professional bodies in Wales and their fringe events.

Main political party conferences

The Public Affairs Manager has been attending Health Hotel meetings, of which the HPC is a member, to prepare for the party conferences which took place in September. The Chief Executive and President also attended a Health Hotel Summer Reception in Parliament with many influential peers and MPs in attendance.

The President and Chief Executive, accompanied by the Public Affairs Manager, represented the HPC at the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat party conferences in September. As a non-fringe member of the 'Health Hotel', along with 34 other organisations (including fellow regulators GMC, NMC and GDC, charities and trade unions) the HPC took part in private consultations with parliamentarians from the health teams of the three main political parties. This was to discuss future health policies and the direction of professional regulation. The Health Hotel receptions and fringe meetings were well-attended by political representatives and key stakeholders, and were a good opportunity for the HPC to communicate its important role in protecting the public. Speakers included the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson MP, Conservative health spokesperson, Andrew Lansley MP and Liberal Democrat health spokesperson, Norman Lamb MP. The discussions covered topics such as the balance between culpability and accountability in healthcare and the future of the NHS.

The unique environment of the political party conferences meant that HPC representatives were able to speak in an informal environment with key politicians, discuss future plans and build relationships with many stakeholders across the health arena while promoting the work of the HPC.

If you want to find out more about the work of the Health Hotel visit www.healthhotel.org.uk

2) Regulation of psychologists

We expect that the Healthcare and Associated Professions (Miscellaneous Amendments) No 2 Order 2008 will be laid in both Westminster and (for the first time) the Scottish Parliament in mid-October. This is the legislation that contains the details about the future regulation of practitioner psychologists by the HPC.

It is important that the Health and Sport Committee in Scotland are informed about the HPC before scrutinising the legislation so we plan to send a detailed briefing to the relevant MSPs and offer a meeting. As briefed earlier in this report, we will be attending the Scottish National Party (SNP) Annual Conference in October and this will be a further opportunity to brief MSPs.

Key parliamentarians in Westminster will also be sent a briefing, closer to the date of the debate in the House of Lords (anticipated to be January 2009). An interview with the Chief Executive about our plans to regulate practitioner

psychologists will be published on the ePolitix.com website, whose main audience includes politicians and their researchers.

3) Potential regulation of psychotherapists and counsellors

We understand that many Members of Parliament (MPs) continue to receive queries from constituents about the possible regulation of psychotherapists and counsellors. The following activities aim to inform parliamentarians and their researchers about the work that we are doing.

- 'Call for ideas' on the statutory regulation of psychotherapists and counsellors was the featured campaign on the popular political website ePolitix.com for the week beginning 29 September.
- Email to all MPs sent out week beginning 6 October. This was to let them know where to refer queries from constituents and highlight our call for ideas and stakeholder input.

Employer Events

Following the success of the Employer Events in late 2007 and early 2008, we have decided to launch a second programme of events across the UK. These events are designed to provide useful and practical information for human resources and personnel directors within the NHS, service managers and others that employ HPC registrants in local authorities and private practice. Topics will include information for employers on registration and renewal, and updates on developments at the HPC.

Detailed workshops will be included for the first time, following feedback from the launch events. These will focus on fitness to practise and continuing professional development – key areas for both employers and registrants, especially with the first CPD audits having taken place this year. Employees from the Fitness to Practice, Registration, Policy and Standards and Communications Departments will also be available to answer questions and offer support and advice.

The first two events will be held in London on Thursday 27 November and Cardiff on Wednesday 3 December. These will be followed by events in Leeds, Edinburgh and Belfast in February and March 2009.

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Appendices

None

6 October 2008