

Communications Committee, Wednesday 21 January 2009

Refresh of public information materials and [www.hpcheck.org](http://www.hpcheck.org)  
Jonathan Jones - Publications Manager  
and Tony Glazier - Web Manager

Executive summary and recommendations

### **Introduction**

To make our public information and hpcheck website more accessible and easier to use, we have taken external advice and decided to refresh the print materials and the website.

The key changes to the **public information materials** are as follows.

- Unnecessary verbiage, jargon and 'HPC speak' will be removed to hone the content down as far as possible.
- The font size will be increased throughout.
- More white space will be included to give a fresher feel to the materials and to make the content easier to read.

These changes will make the materials easier to use and more accessible – particularly for people who are visually impaired or have a learning disability. The new materials will also be approved by the Plain English Campaign and we envisage that the leaflet will bear the Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark.

The key changes to the **hpcheck website** are as follows.

- Revisions to the design of the site will bring it in line with the HPC's current visual identity.
- The style of illustrations and content will reflect that of the public information materials – providing increased consistency across media.
- Improvements made to the functionality of the online register, including search results that will be clearer and easier to navigate.
- Aligning the site more closely with the HPC's main website [www.hpc-uk.org](http://www.hpc-uk.org) and improving the navigation between the sites

Market research was carried out with members of the public to test the usability and relevance of the current site. The findings from this research helped shape the revised content, design and functionality of the new site.

### **Decision**

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

## **Background information**

The public information materials (poster, leaflet and window sticker) were reviewed by Connect, the communication disability network, and the Plain English Campaign. See appendices 1 and 2 for details of the brief for Connect and Connect's report. The RNIB's 'See it Right' guidelines were also consulted.

## **Resource implications**

None (part of Publications Manager, Communications Manager and Web Manager objectives)

## **Financial implications**

None (part of publications / web budget).

## **Appendices**

1. Copy of brief supplied to Connect ('Health Professions Council – review of materials by Connect').
2. A review of Health Professions Council materials by Connect.

## **Date of paper**

Wednesday 21 January 2009

## Health Professions Council – review of materials by Connect

### **Background**

The Health Professions Council (HPC) has a statutory obligation to communicate with the public. As part of this work, we have produced a set of materials to communicate who we are, what we do, and how we can help. The intended audience for these materials is the general public, and more specifically those who have the need to use the services of the 13 health professions which we currently regulate. They are intended to be distributed to members of the public via the health professionals whom we regulate (registrants), and are displayed in GP surgeries and other locations such as hospitals and private healthcare practices.

We would like you to consider the following specific questions/areas when undertaking your review.

### **Style of presentation**

- Size, format and extent of materials – how easy are they to use? Are the choices of materials appropriate? Are they the right length?
- Colour – are the colours used easy to see? Is there sufficient contrast between text and background?
- Use of imagery – are the images clear and do they communicate who we are and what we do?
- Icons/pictograms – could these be successfully used and if so what should they be and what could they communicate?
- Type of materials used – is the thickness of the paper and the type of paper ('uncoated') suitable for the materials? Is a window/vehicle window sticker an appropriate format?

### **Getting the message across**

- Having read the materials, are you clear on what the Health Professions Council 'is' and how it can help you?
- Suitability of text for intended audience – is the language pitched at the right level? Do any terms or abbreviations need explanation?
- Content and structure – is anything missing or redundant? Is the order logical? Are there enough (or too many) titles, headings and subheadings?
- Graphical representations – could any of the information be more effectively communicated using charts or diagrams? Would this make the information more accessible and easier to understand?
- Could you find the HPC's contact details easily? Is it a problem that the leaflet includes three different telephone numbers and two different web addresses?
- It could be said that the materials attempt to communicate two distinct, but related, messages; 'check that your health professional is registered' and 'how to complain about your health professional'. Are these two messages

effectively communicated? Are they the right messages to engage our audience? Is the balance right?

### **Terminology and language**

- Are the titles of the posters/leaflets correct? Do you understand what the titles mean? In considering this, you may find it helpful to know what we have produced to date. We produced two posters which were almost identical but had different titles:
  - Health professionals must be regulated so you can be sure...
  - Health professionals are regulated for all the right reasons

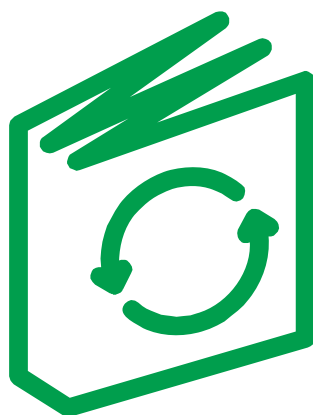
We also produced two posters with the following titles:

- Chiropodists / podiatrists are regulated for all the right reasons
- Physiotherapists are regulated for all the right reasons

We identified these two professions since they are most likely to work in private practise. These posters were designed specifically for use by those two professions.

- Do you understand all of the terms used in the materials? If not, how could we explain them in an easy-to-follow and straightforward way?
- What do you think of the strap line “Working with health professionals to protect the public”? Do you understand what this means? In what way do you understand that the HPC ‘works with health professionals’, and how do you understand the concept ‘protect the public’
- What to you understand by the terms ‘registered’ and ‘regulated’? How could these concepts be more clearly communicated?

# A review of Health Professions Council materials by



[www.ukconnect.org](http://www.ukconnect.org)

## A review of Health Professions Council materials by Connect



Jonathan Jones and Ebony Gayle brought four examples of **Health Professions Council** (HPC) literature to Connect. These were discussed by three people with aphasia -

- Wendy Cumberland
- Brian Butler
- Alan Hewitt.

The literature was produced fairly recently but needs **fine tuning**. The **audience** for all these materials is the same - **members of the public** who use the services of health professionals.

Each item has the **same overall purpose** - to convey clearly and succinctly to the public that the **Health Professions Council** protects their interests by registering and regulating certain health professionals. **The four items** discussed at the meeting were -

- 1. General information leaflet about the HPC**
- 2. Poster about the HPC for display in waiting rooms or on professionals' walls. Two alternative versions of this poster were provided for discussion.**
- 3. Poster explaining why physiotherapists should be registered with HPC**
- 4. Window sticker showing compliance with the HPC for display by registered professionals**

The group made a general point that all the materials are fairly accessible, but that they could be improved.

Guiding principles for enhancing accessibility include:

- be on the look out for **unnecessary verbiage** and **jargon**
- **hone** the material down as far as possible
- keep the **audience** in mind at all times.

This document summarises the main points arising from the discussion of the HPC material.

## **1. General information leaflet about the HPC, available to the general public**



A group member commented that this leaflet is not very inviting - *'I would pass it by... it doesn't mean anything to me.'* The group discussed the leaflet and made recommendations about its

- **content**
- **structure and headings**
- **overall presentation**
- **language**
- **illustrations.**

### **Content**

It was felt that the leaflet contains a little too much detail that is unlikely to be of interest and may be confusing to the reader. For example the explanation of *'protected titles'* - the content needs to explain simply what the HPC **does**, who is **registered**, and why it this is **important** to the reader. It also needs to give **clear contact details** and to signpost the reader on to further information and support. The group felt it should be made clearer in the leaflet that private practitioners must also be registered with the HPC.

### **Structure and headings**

The group felt that the title of the leaflet (*'Is your health professional HPC registered?'*), with its jargon and the acronym HPC – which incidentally appears different to the acronym in the logo - is **confusing**, unclear, and unlikely to attract interest.



They suggested a better title might be: '***What is the Health Professions Council?***' as this would get straight to the point.

The second and third page have different headings that similarly caused confusion, especially as each contain different polysyllabic, formal words that are **similar** in appearance... '***regulated***' and '***registered***'. It was unclear how these headings relate to the material below them and the group suggested they should be scrapped.

The group felt that the sub headings: '***What is the HPC?***' and '***What does that mean for me?***' are clear although **Health Professions Council** needs to be spelt out, rather than using the acronym HPC. They suggested that it would be logical to swap the content of the two blue boxes on pages 2 and 3. The group felt it was appropriate to have contact details on the final page of the leaflet. It is therefore not necessary to give the contact details at the bottom of the bulleted list of professions.

### **Overall presentation**

The size of the leaflet (A5) was approved and is preferable to a folded leaflet as it gives **more** white space and enables a good font size. The dark blue background, the same hue as the HPC logo, helps to make the leaflet feel professional. However, there may be an issue for readers with visual impairment in terms of contrast and readability.

The leaflet font is **sans serif**, which makes it clear, but was felt to be too **small** and was difficult to see. If the content is honed down and some of the redundant headings removed, this will allow font size to be increased, ideally to 12 or 14pt.

The main heading on page 1 should be **larger** or emboldened to increase readability.

The group debated then approved the bulleted list of regulated professions, and the fact they are placed in alphabetical order. The reader may not know what **some** of the titles mean (for example, '*orthoptists*'), but the group felt that explanations of each profession would be too **unwieldy** for a short leaflet like this. That information can be found on the HPC website, for those who use computers.

The final page, which lists various options for enquiries and contact details, was felt to be too **wordy** and **unclear**. The font is small and the number of different phone numbers is confusing. The information on the last page probably would be clearer if it were in large blue font on a white background, rather than reversed out white on blue. It would be a good idea to try and create a **standard way** of listing contacts that is replicated in different publications, to provide the reader with **clear** and **consistent** signposting.

The group suggested listing contact and information options starting with postal address, email, website and finishing with telephone details. Each of these options needs to be prefaced with a little **icon** (telephone, computer, letter, email etc). The different telephone options could be displayed in boxes -

General enquiries:  
0207 582 0866  
Mon-Fri 9-5

To check a  
professional's  
registration:  
0845 300 4472

To make a  
complaint:  
0207 840 9814

In fact, the options for checking registration (phone, ID card, website etc) could similarly be displayed in **adjacent boxes**. This information would also be clearer if prefaced with little icons (an ID card, a certificate, a computer, a telephone).

The group suggested that the **availability of alternative formats** (such as large print, audio version etc) should be placed on the final page. Again, to break up lines of text and to make it stand out, this information could be displayed in a box or a circle.

Finally, the group looked at the strapline (***Working with health professionals to protect the public***) and felt this would have more **impact** if presented in an oval rather like a **stamp**... again this could appear on every publication near the HPC logo, as part of the organisation's branding.

Although the group quite liked the strapline, they preferred the sentence that appears on the window sticker (***You're in safe hands***) feeling that this sounds friendly, gives a direct and accessible idea of what the HPC does and would therefore have

more **impact** with the public. It is, however, less formal and this might not be the impression the HPC wants to convey.

## **Language**

Some of the language of the leaflet is rather **formal** (**'We currently regulate...'**) and some sentences are very **long**, for example sentence 2, page 2. The group suggested **shortening** sentences, removing **jargon** (such as **'protected title'**) and using direct, informal language where possible, for example –

### ***What is the Health Professions Council?***

*We register professionals who meet our standards for their skills, behaviour and health. We ensure they meet these standards. We can take action against professionals who fall below these standards.*

### ***What does the HPC mean for me?***

*It means that the professionals you see are genuine and meet national standards. It also offers you protection if the professionals fail to meet these standards.*

### ***Which professionals are registered with the HPC?***

*Here is a list of the professions that we register.  
You and your family may see these health professionals in an NHS clinic, privately, at home, in hospital or at school.*

## **Illustrations**

The group discussed and approved the illustrations for the leaflet and felt they clearly convey **relevant** information. They felt the card shown by the figures could perhaps be **larger** and more **prominent**, as this makes the point about checking ID, **without words**.

## **2. Poster about the HPC for display in waiting rooms or on professionals' walls**



Two alternative versions of this poster were provided, and the group rejected the one headed '**Health professionals are regulated for all the right reasons**' as it was felt to be both over-formal and ambiguous. They focussed on the poster entitled: '**Health professionals must be registered so you can be sure**'.... which appears less wordy and seems clearer on first glance.

One major problem picked up by the group was the predominantly **blue background**, with reversed out print. Legibility is reduced when there is a lot of text, so it was suggested that the blue be restricted perhaps to **one part** of the poster, perhaps as a background to the illustrations and the bulleted list. Larger, emboldened font would also be helpful.

Again, the group felt that the **ID card** could be **larger**, and that the strapline could be placed in an oval stamp near the HPC logo.

The group felt the final tick point ('*turn to the HPC with any concerns*') is **ambiguous** and the acronym is **confusing**. They suggested replacing it with a simpler phrase: '**you are protected.**'

The group felt that the blurb in small print the centre of the poster is too **detailed**, unnecessary, and should be removed. The information about NHS or private professionals could preface the alphabetical list.

The group suggested replacing '*If in doubt..*' with '**Concerned?**' followed by the contact details in blue on white, with icons, presented in a form **consistent** with the contact details on the information leaflet.

### ***3. Poster explaining why physiotherapists should be registered with HPC***



The group rejected the heading for this poster and suggested making it consistent with the general information poster:

***‘Physiotherapists must registered so you can be sure...’***

followed by the tick list, replacing the last point with ***‘you are protected’***.

The information about where physios work should be amended to make it clear that **private** practitioners must also be registered with the HPC.

The group suggested losing the small print blurb as it provides **too much information** and contains **jargon** (***‘protected title’***).

The group felt it was unnecessary to go into detail about how to check for registration. The illustration tells you, without words, that professionals can show you their ID card. The poster should simply provide contact details and enquiry options in blue on white, with icons, **consistent** with the contact details on the information leaflet.

**Reducing the verbiage** in small print will make it easier to enlarge and embolden the font of the retained text, making the reversed out print easier to read.



#### ***4. Window sticker showing compliance with the HPC for display by registered professionals***



The group approved this sticker and thought the phrase '*You're in safe hands*' was **direct, informal and straightforward** (although one group member felt this made it more suitable for display in a car, rather than a hospital clinic).

The suggestion was made that '*You're in safe hands*' could become the HPC strapline as it strikes the **right tone** and conveys the **necessary** information.

## ***Conclusion***



**The Connect group felt the HPC materials to be of a high standard, and that the care taken to improve their accessibility is commendable.**

The materials would benefit from some **streamlining**. It would be helpful to try and **reduce** blocks of wordy text by presenting **clear, simple** messages as **visually** as possible.

The materials would also benefit from more **consistency** in the phrases used and the **presentation** of the strapline and contact details.