

Communications Committee 4 November 2010

HPC events: the next steps in meeting our stakeholders

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The HPC runs a busy programme of external and internal events. This paper aims to outline current activity for external audiences organised by the Communications Department, review these events and set out activity for the 2011-12 year.

The activities outlined in this paper align with the objectives in the communication strategy which support our statutory obligation to communicate with stakeholders. This obligation is set out in Article 3 (13) in the Health Professions Order 2001: 'the Council shall inform and educate registrants, and shall inform the public about its work'.

Decision

The Committee is invited to discuss the attached document.

Background information

See introduction

Resource implications

Resources are set out in the departmental workplan which is approved by the Communications Committee and are linked to the department's budget which is approved by the Finance and Resources Committee.

Financial implications

As above.

Appendices

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Introduction

Events provide a valuable opportunity for the Health Professions Council (HPC) to meet face-to-face with stakeholders, communicate key messages and raise public awareness and understanding of its work. In addition they provide a crucial channel to receive feedback from its stakeholders.

The HPC runs a busy programme of external and internal events. This paper aims to outline current activity for external audiences organised by the Communications Department, review these events and set out activity for the 2011-12 year. This paper will also undertake a comparison of the event activities of other health regulators as a benchmark for the HPC's events.

The current events programme is made up of attending external conferences, such as:

- Profession and public facing health events
- Professional body conferences
- Party conferences
- Regulation events
- Stakeholder events
- Other public information agency events (such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Trading Standards Institute)

The HPC also organise events for registrants and other stakeholders, including:

- Listening Events
- Employer Events
- Information Events

As well as organising these events, the events team offers support and guidance to departments across the organisation, i.e. stakeholder meetings, annual meetings and education run seminars.

1. External events

The external conferences are a mixture of professional body events, independent health conferences and events for employers and aspirant groups. These events can attract large numbers of HPC registrants, members of the public, referrers or HR managers and employers of health professionals on the HPC register.

Over the past few years the number of external events attended or organised by the Communication Department has risen significantly. At the end of this financial year the HPC will have had a presence at 31 external events, compared to just six in 2007. Of these, 24 will be by way of a stand (this could also include a

speaking slot), four will have been speaking slots only¹ and three will be inserts into delegate packs, which is a cost effective way of distributing relevant information to a target audience. The HPC will also have had a presence at ten stakeholder events including all nine main Political Party Conferences in the UK and the devolved administrations.

During the last two years the HPC has developed new relationships with some of the bigger health shows, such as Naidex and Independent Living Scotland (now rebranded as Naidex Scotland). Contra deals have been arranged with the organiser which enables the HPC to be a show partner. Advantages of this include, additional stand space free of charge, inclusion in the 'Supporters' section of the show's website, including logo, company summary and link to the HPC website and seminar slots in the CPD Seminar Schedule during the show. Much of what the HPC is required to provide is standard event promotion for external events attended.

1.2 Benefits of attending external events

Attendance at external events is an effective means of meeting registrants face to face. Having an exhibition stand gives the HPC a visible 'anchor' which is valuable for increasing networking opportunities, reaching greater numbers of delegates and promoting key messages.

When the stand is manned by representatives from across the organisation, we have the ability to answer questions immediately and efficiently. Registrants value the opportunity to meet individuals from the HPC and this is something that is often fed back at the events. The vast majority of questions raised at these events relate to registrations, continuing professional development (CPD) and fitness to practise (FtP). It is therefore important to have a representative from these departments at external events whenever possible.

As well as speaking to delegates, large quantities of relevant publications and guidance booklets are distributed. Individuals are also encouraged to sign up to *HPC In Focus* increasing the readership of this key communication tool.

Attending exhibitions enables the HPC to reach large numbers of people over a relatively short period of time. For example at this year's College of Occupational Therapists Annual Conference (three day event) there were 212 visits to the stand and 707 visits at Naidex 2010 (three day event).

Contrary to the general expectation, the current economic situation does not seem to have impacted on attendance rates at external events. According to conference organisers, attendance figures at annual events have steadily been increasing since 2007. It is crucial, therefore, that the HPC continues to have a presence at these events. However, it is worth recognising that at this point in time we have not yet seen the full extent of the cuts to the health and social care sector and what impact this will have on attendance at professional body events, where delegates usually have to pay a fee.

There are considerable advantages to exhibiting at campaign specific events such as:

¹ These are additional to speaking engagements undertaken by individuals across the organisation including representatives from Policy, FtP and Education as well as the Chief Executive and Chair.

- The National Care Forum Annual Conference – ‘Be healthwise’ campaign
- The Care Show – ‘Be healthwise’ campaign
- RCGP Sustainable Primary Care – referrers campaign

Attendance at events such as these can be an effective way of helping to measure the success of the campaigns. For example, since the launch of the ‘Be healthwise’ campaign at the NCF Annual Conference 2008, the HPC has continued to have a presence at this event and has exhibited at the last three Care Shows in Bournemouth. We have been able to gauge the effectiveness of the campaign by comparing the level of awareness of the HPC and its work among delegates.

The HPC also attends the professional body events for current registrants and some new professions. This is a good way of demonstrating how we work closely with the professional body organisations.

1.3 Drawbacks of attending external events

The cost of exhibiting, taking in to account stand space, furniture hire, electricity and accommodation is on average £2,700. Depending on the number of visits to the stand, this can be an expensive way to meet registrants. On reflection, attendance at certain events has not resulted in the best value for money. The HPC could have found better ways to promote messages, for example by including materials in delegate packs or providing a speaker.

At other external events the same outcome achieved from taking a stand could have been achieved instead by sending the appropriate HPC representative as a delegate. An example of this is at devolved countries’ main Political Party conferences.

A significant drawback to exhibiting at external events is that they rely heavily on employees to man the exhibition stands. With more events in the schedule, overlapping occurs frequently during the busy months. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure cover for the stands. Departments across the organisation support as much as they can, but are not always able to release employees to attend events which places additional burden on the Communications Department.

With so many commitments already in the events schedule there is not enough scope to research new opportunities and makes it difficult to attend events relevant to campaigns or new professions. The HPC therefore risks missing valuable opportunities to promote messages to key audiences.

1.4 Conclusions

Although it can be costly both financially and in employees’ time, the points discussed suggest that it is still beneficial to have a presence at external events.

1. The HPC should exhibit at professional body/profession specific events every two years in line with the professions renewal cycle, instead of annually. This would still enable the HPC to address the concerns of registrants, but allow for more flexibility in the events programme. It would also relieve growing pressure to provide cover, whilst maintaining an

image as a regulator that is working with professional bodies and engaging with registrants.

2. In the years that the HPC does not have a presence by way of an exhibition stand, relevant materials should be provided for the delegate packs.
3. Another cost-effective approach to profession specific events would be to provide more speakers at events. This is an effective way of delivering information to registrants. Speaking engagements again mean that there is less pressure on employees' time, as it would require only one HPC representative to be out of the office for one day, depending on the location.
4. The benefit of developing partnerships with the well known health shows has already been highlighted. Contra deals have given the HPC many advantages and this should be repeated where feasible.
5. The Stakeholder Communications Manager is trialling placing an advert in the devolved administration's conference guides to highlight the HPC's presence as a delegate at party conferences. This should increase networking opportunities without the 'anchor' provided by an exhibition stand. If successful this could be repeated at other events.
6. It is important that we secure the continued support from departments across the HPC. As already highlighted, this ensures we have representatives with the appropriate knowledge to be able to answer questions effectively. Not only does this provide the best value for money it also reinforces the perception that the HPC is a well organised and professional organisation.

2. Registrant events

2.1 Listening Events

Each year the HPC hosts 16 Listening Events in eight locations around the UK. The aim of these events is to ensure regular contact with registrants and to keep in touch with their views and requirements.

The HPC travels to areas where registrants work and live, going to remote rural areas as well as the bigger towns and cities. Feedback from these Listening Events has been consistently positive with registrants appreciating the HPC coming to visit them.

The Listening Events are currently delivered as two sessions per location, the afternoon session starting at 1.45pm and the evening session at 4.45pm. These times work well for our registrants and fit around their working patterns. We are not currently looking to change the times of these events.

Each begins with registration, refreshments and the opportunity to meet with Council members and members of the HPC Executive. The session formally starts with introductions and two presentations, an update on the work of the HPC and regulation and then on CPD and the audit process.

A question and answer session takes place after the presentations when registrants can direct questions or raise points to the panel which is made up of members on the HPC Executive, Council and either the Chief Executive or Chair.

In the past, we have incorporated smaller facilitated discussion groups after the presentations with the facilitator feeding back the main points/issues raised in these groups to the audience and other panel members. After which there is a general discussion to explore further the points raised in the discussion groups.

Events have attracted delegate numbers of between 12 and 60. The 2007 PKF audit of external communications suggested that attendance rates at Listening Events had been disappointing. However, it is important to note that the success of the Listening Events cannot be judged on attendance rates alone. More recently efforts have been made to better promote these events and as a result there has been a significant rise in attendance, with audiences reaching approximately 140 in some cases. Overall, the Listening Events are averaging around 80 delegates per event.

The average cost of each Listening Event is £5,000 depending on location, venue and format.

2.1.1 Benefits of Listening Events

The Listening Events have proven to be a valuable tool for communicating key messages to a large and varied audience. They attract a mixture of professions working in the NHS and in private practise. Not all the professions on the HPC register have an annual or profession specific event, and not all registrants belong to their professional body, so Listening Events can therefore be key in ensuring the HPC is reaching registrants across all professions and locations.

The events are an excellent way to engage with registrants and support them regarding their registration and we have received positive feedback for taking events out of the main towns and cities.

It is often commented that the presentations and the question and answer sessions help to alleviate fears and concerns around CPD and the audit process. Following the extensive CPD talks programme which started in 2007 to support the first round of CPD audits, the Listening Events have become an important way of addressing single issues such as CPD. There is scope to widen the topics discussed at Listening Events, to cover, for example, revalidation or communications, through the smaller discussion group format. This format has worked particularly well giving registrants the opportunity to discuss issues in smaller groups and share best practise with colleagues.

As well as verbal feedback, registrants fill out feedback forms at the events. Where appropriate we are able to act on this and make changes at an operational level. This is fed back at future events and demonstrates our guiding principles of communication and responsiveness. An example of this is continued requests from registrants for further feedback from the CPD audits. As a result, the first CPD annual report has been published and amendments are being made to the standard response letter sent to registrants who pass the audit process.

As well as positive feedback, there can be negative comments or concerns from registrants. These can be due to mixed messages from other colleagues or confusing requirements with those from their professional bodies. The Listening Events are a useful mechanism for correcting these misconceptions about HPC requirements, either through the facilitated discussions or through the question and answer sessions.

The majority of attendees at the Listening Events will feed back to their colleagues; this means that we are reaching larger numbers of registrants than actually attend the events.

There is also great benefit in having senior representatives from the Council in attendance, including the Chief Executive, Chair and Council members as this demonstrates commitment from the organisation to meet registrants, hear their views and answer their questions.

2.1.2 Drawbacks of Listening Events

Whilst travelling to the more rural areas of the UK to reach registrants can largely be seen as a benefit, the less populated the area means fewer attendees. Although it is not practical to look exclusively at the number of attendees and compare this to the cost of the event, it needs to be taken into consideration when booking venues and confirming panel members. The events become more costly with more employees and council members attending.

The size of the panel has been a concern at a number of Listening Events. There have been occasions when the panel has been too large for the size of the audience.

There are two disadvantages to the Listening Event format which uses facilitated groups. The first is that it requires more HPC representatives, whether that is members of the HPC Executive or Council members, in order to facilitate these groups, which in turn increases the size of the panel and it has, on occasions, been difficult to achieve the number of panel members required. The second is that with the improved response to these events, they have become oversubscribed and we have had to cap numbers at 80 to accommodate the smaller group discussions. We have also had to initiate a reserve list because we have been unable to accommodate all of those who wished to attend which has resulted in turning away registrants. With audiences of over 80 registrants it is not possible to split delegates into smaller groups for facilitated discussions.

2.2. Information Events

The HPC has run Information Events in the Channel Islands and on the Isle of Man. These events focused on the CPD audits and regulation. Like Listening Events, they provide an opportunity for registrants to meet HPC representatives as well as network with other local registrants.

The Information Events follow a similar format to the Listening Events without the discussion groups. There are two identical sessions, each beginning with a brief introduction and update from the HPC as well as current and future developments in regulation. This is then followed by an in-depth look at the CPD standards and audit process. There is a question and answer session and an

open discussion is encouraged. Copies of relevant HPC literature are also available for registrants to take away.

The panel is made up of just two HPC representatives. A maximum of two other HPC employees attend these events to organise the logistics of the day. Depending on the numbers this could be reduced to one person meaning a total of three HPC representatives at the event.

2.2.1 Benefits of Information Events

These events have similar benefits as the Listening Events without being so reliant on HPC employees, with the added benefit of being able to accommodate large numbers of registrants.

At around £3000, the Information Events provide excellent value for money.

2.2.2 Drawbacks of Information Events

Other than not having the opportunity for break out groups or the presence of a Council member, there are no significant drawbacks to these events.

2.3 Conclusions

1. We will aim to organise 18 events for registrants combining a mixture of information and Listening Events in 9 locations across the UK. We will continue to visit rural areas as well as the bigger towns and cities and will continue to involve Executive and Council members. Depending on the number of registrants at each, the panel will be made up of between two and three people drawn from members of the HPC Executive and Council. We will continue to explore ways of making these events more interactive, for example posing questions and asking people to have a conversation with their neighbour for five minutes before making observations (as successfully trialled at the annual meeting).
2. Events with discussion groups will be organised when necessary to discuss specific topics, such as revalidation, or reviewing a particular issue such as CPD. The discussion groups could be used to explore this area in more detail and the HPC be able to look at the feedback received in relation to developing policy on an operational level.
3. It is important that the HPC representatives are provided with a comprehensive briefing so that they can be well-informed about current issues effecting regulation and the HPC more generally.

3. Employer Events

Employer Events aim to provide practical information for human resources, personnel directors and service managers within the NHS and other employers or managers of HPC registrants in local authorities and private practice. There are four events a year which take place in cities across the UK during November and December.

The events begin with presentations including information on registration and renewal, international and temporary registrants, revalidation and a general update on other developments at the HPC, followed by a question and answer

session. Delegates are then split into two groups for workshops on fitness to practise and CPD, both key areas for employers.

3.1 Benefits of Employer Events

Communicating with employers is a particularly important and well recognised area of work for the HPC. This was reflected in the 2008/2009 performance review by the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) which stated: "The HPC demonstrates excellence or good practice in communication with employers about the role of HPC and its work" (Performance review of health professional regulatory bodies, 2008/09, CHRE).

Positive feedback has been received from attendees at Employer Events, and many feed back to colleagues especially regarding the FtP process.

The HPC is often asked by registrants what is being done to ensure employees understand what is required of them by the HPC, these concerns usually relate to CPD and FtP. Employer Events go some way to address these concerns and keep employers well informed about their obligations as employers of health professionals.

3.2 Drawbacks of Employer Events

The current format of these events includes presentations about the HPC, a question and answer session and two workshops (FtP and the CPD audit process). It is extremely resource heavy in terms of the length of day and number of HPC employees attending. The events are a full day with lunch provided and there can often be up to nine or ten members of the HPC attending each event. All the Employer Events are also held within the space of one or two months which further adds to the resource load for employees.

The events take place in London, Cardiff, Belfast and either Edinburgh or Glasgow, which although covers the four nations, neglects other areas of the UK.

Although the workshops cover topics of importance to employers, it is hard to make a workshop on CDP interactive for employers and based on feedback the information can be delivered more appropriately in a presentation.

3.3 Conclusions

1. Discussions are already underway between the Events Manager, Stakeholder Communications Manager and Communications Director about changing the format to make the events shorter and less resource heavy whilst still achieving the objective of informing employers about the HPC and our requirements. The Events Manager has attended events organised by other regulators to gain a better understand of how they are engaging with employers.
2. Given the importance of meeting with employers, we are already looking to widen the areas we visit with these events and roll out a continued and increased programme of six events across the UK.
3. The format will be shortened to a half day, from 9.30am to 12.30pm, and will consist of a general HPC presentation including a registrations and CPD audit update and a question and answer session. This will be

followed by a tea and coffee break and then an in depth presentation from a Fitness to Practice representative and focus on case studies. There will also be the opportunity to ask questions after this presentation. Publications will be available to take away.

4. Using this format will reduce the cost of the Employer Events and the need for so many HPC employees to attend. The panel will be made up of two presenters and a chair, one or two other employees will attend to manage the event.

4 What are other regulators doing?

4.1 Nursing and Midwifery Council

The NMC has similar stakeholder audiences to the HPC; registrants, employers and managers, students and educators.

The NMC's events programme consists of the following:

Employer Roadshows

The NMC run a series of roadshows to help managers and employers understand how the fitness to practise processes works. The events are similar to HPC Employer Events and offer a chance to learn more about the work of the NMC overall. They included the opportunity for discussions and networking. The events are open to anyone who has managerial or supervisory responsibility for nurses or midwives, at any level. There are 14 of these events across the UK per year.

Meet the NMC

These are invitation only events for Directors of Nursing for Directors of Nursing, Directors of Human Resources and Heads of Midwifery to meet the NMC Chief Executive and other senior staff. The objective is to develop effective partnerships with senior nurses and midwives who can positively influence the behaviour of nurses and midwives and promote public safety.

There are nine of these events organised through the year, all of these events are held at the NMC offices in London, the events includes a tour of both NMC sites including the fitness to practice suite.

Consultation and implementation events

These are ad hoc events organised as and when appropriate.

External events

The NMC exhibit at around 10 external events a year including:

- Royal Collage of Nursing Annual Conference
- Royal Collage of Midwives Annual Conference
- Primary Care
- Unison Annual Conference

4.2 General Medical Council

The GMC attends and organises a programme of events throughout the year. These include attending exhibitions and organising conferences, focus groups

and consultations. Their main audiences include doctors, patients and the public, employers, medical schools, the medical Royal Colleges.

Chair's Visits

The GMC Chair attends one visit per month. These are held across the UK and the purpose is to visit doctors and give them a general GMC update and talk about any specific issues that are relevant at the time, e.g. revalidation. There are usually around 100-200 doctors in attendance. The GMC use the devolved offices to help arrange these as they have a good contacts in the areas visited. They also arrange meetings for the Chair while he is in the area.

Fresher's Fairs

The GMC attend relevant Fresher's Fairs across the UK to speak to potential student doctors.

Conferences

The GMC run their own conferences for specific audiences. Their most recent conference is for educators of doctors, called Tomorrow's Professionals: GMC Education Conference and takes place in London. They are expecting around 300 attendees. The GMC does not currently have any further conferences in their programme of events.

External events

The GMC attends around seven BMA and BMJ events throughout the year. They also attend events such as:

- Sans and Bliss Joint conference
- NHS Employers Annual Conference
- NHS Alliance Annual Conference

4.3 Conclusion

Both the NMC and GMC use event software to manage bookings for their own events. The GMC also use an external events management company to organise their larger conferences. The GMC have six employees working on events.

Both the NMC and GMC use companies that store their stands and publications, these companies deliver the materials to the external events and set the stands up. Although this would cut down on the time it takes to pack for events, both event organisers have experienced problems with the wrong materials being sent to events and have had issues with out of date stock.

5. Workplan for 2011-12:

For the financial year 2011—2012:

- 1 We will exhibit at up to 16 stands across the course of the year.

Ten professions will be renewing during this time, of these there are seven appropriate profession facing events where the HPC could take a stand. These include: BPS Annual Conference; BAPO; RCSLT Annual Conference; COT Annual Conference; Biomedical Science Congress; UKRC; and CSP Annual Conference.

There are nine public or stakeholder facing events that have proven to be of substantial benefit, these are: Naidex Birmingham; Primary Care; Citizens Advice Bureau Scotland; Citizens Advice Bureau; Naidex South; Naidex Scotland (event takes place every two years); Health and Wellbeing at Work; NHS Employers; and Unison.

The final programme will be determined by considering timings and previous event evaluations.

- 2 In addition to taking stands, we will seek cost effective ways of reaching registrants at profession-specific conferences including providing materials for the delegate packs and speaker slots.
- 3 We will organise 18 Listening and Information Events in 9 locations across the UK throughout the year. We will continue to visit rural areas as well as the bigger towns and cities and will continue to involve Executive and Council members. We will also continue to explore ways of making these events more interactive.
- 4 We will organise a programme of six Employer Events which will be rolled out throughout the year in the larger towns and cities across the UK.
- 5 We will maximise opportunities to participate at Health Hotel and fringe events at the main Political Party Conferences in the UK and the devolved administrations as well as stakeholder conferences in the four nations.
- 6 A new process of recording all external talks given across the organisation will be implemented to ensure all presentations are being recorded. This will also help to make sure we do not duplicate effort, for example take stands unnecessarily at events where we already have a speaking slot. It will also mean we can more accurately record our attendance at external conferences and exhibitions.
- 7 This programme of work allows for flexibility to research new events and attend further exhibitions relevant to new professions and campaigns, for example the Care Show.

Susan Carini, Events Manager
October 2010