
Communications Committee

Minutes of the 32nd meeting of the Communications Committee held as follows:-

Date: Wednesday 22 June 2011

Time: 11:00 am

Venue: The Council Chamber, Health Professions Council, Park House, 184
Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU

Present: Sheila Drayton (Chair)
Julia Drown
Morag MacKellar
Arun Midha (item 7-part of item 10)
Joy Tweed
Diane Waller

In attendance:

Mr C Bendall, Secretary to the Committee
Ms E Gayle, Media and Public Relations Manager
Mr T Glazier, Web Manager
Ms S Herelle, Communications Officer (Events)
Mr J Jones, Publishing Manager
Ms J Ladds, Director of Communications
Ms S Oliver, PA/Team Administrator
Dr A van der Gaag, Council Chair

Item 1.11/17 Apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed three observers to the meeting: Ms Herelle, Ms J Khalfan (Public Affairs and Media Manager at the General Social Care Council) and Ms Oliver.
- 1.2 There were no apologies for absence. The Committee noted that Dr Midha had been delayed due to travel problems.

Item 2.11/18 Approval of agenda

- 2.1 The Committee approved the agenda.

Item 3.11/19 Declarations of members' interests

- 3.1 Members had no interests to declare in connection with the items on the agenda.

Item 4.11/20 Minutes of the Communications Committee meeting of 17 February 2011 (report ref: CC 11/11)

- 4.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the 31st meeting of the Communications Committee should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Item 5.11/21 Matters arising (report ref: CC 12/11)

- 5.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive.
- 5.2 The Committee noted the actions list as agreed at the last meeting.

Item 6.11/22 Director of Communications report

- 6.1 The Committee received a verbal report from the Director of Communications.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that the department's recent work would be discussed under the next item.

Item 7.11/23 Communications department progress report (report ref: CC 13/11)

- 7.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive, giving a progress report against the activities and objectives in the Communications Department workplan for 2011-12

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7.2 In discussion, the following activities were highlighted:

- in advance of renewal notices being sent to registrants, meetings were taking place (with input from the Registration Department) with professional bodies' membership managers. The renewal of practitioner psychologists had been completed with a lapsing rate of 6.5% compared to 7.2% in 2009. Meetings had been held with professional bodies to promote the renewal process for orthoptists;
- production of several publications, including revised versions of 'Periods of adaption' and 'Returning to Practice'. A new research report 'Alternative mechanisms for resolving disputes: A literature review' had also been published;
- dealing with requests for publications. The most frequently requested publications continued to be 'Standards of conduct, performance and ethics', 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students' and 'Continuing professional development and your registration'. 195 public information packs had been issued in the last three months.
- Meet the HPC events had been held in Bradford and Sheffield in June, with the events being attended by a total of approximately 300 registrants. The next Meet the HPC events would be held in Canterbury in early July and both were full, with approximately 250 attendees anticipated;
- HPC had been the show partner at Naidex national, the UK's largest exhibition covering subjects such as disability, homecare and rehabilitation. Over the course of three days, the HPC representatives had seen approximately 600 people including members of the public and registered professionals;
- monitoring media coverage relating to new professions and responding where appropriate, such as issuing statements on the Munro review of child protection and a recent television documentary on the abuse of vulnerable patients at a private hospital;
- monitoring parliamentary activity and submitting written responses to calls for evidence in the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The Chief Executive and Registrar was due to give evidence to the House of Lords on 23 June 2011;
- meetings with professional bodies in February-May 2011;

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- arranging six events for employers, with the first two events due to take place in Liverpool and Birmingham in July, both of which were fully booked with approximately 80-100 delegates attending each; and
- monitoring and generating media coverage, including dealing with 140 requests from journalists and generating 63 articles in professional journals.

7.3 The Committee noted that the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence was aware of HPC's current work on public and patient involvement.

7.4 The Committee discussed whether HPC could make it easier for service users to find a registered health professional. The Committee noted that the issue of access to regulators' registers had been discussed in the past. The Committee agreed that the Executive should prepare a paper for the next meeting, exploring methods of engaging and informing services users and how HPC could facilitate and promote greater access to the Register.

Action: JL (by 8 November 2011)

7.5 The Committee noted that each activity in the department's workplan was clearly linked to Council's strategic objectives. It was agreed that this would enable Council members to better understand the contribution of the Communication Department to Council's agenda. The Committee thanked the department for its work.

Item 8.11/24 'Enabling Excellence' – looking at the importance of HPC communications (report ref: CC 14/11)

8.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive.

8.2 The Committee noted that the paper articulated some of the communications challenges arising from the government's Command Paper 'Enabling Excellence: Autonomy and Accountability for Healthcare Workers, Social Workers and Social Care Workers', which had been published in February 2011. In particular, the paper addressed the possible introduction of assured voluntary regulation and proposed regulation of herbal medicine practitioners. The paper also began to identify ways which HPC could address the challenges through effective communication strategies.

8.3 The Committee agreed that the issues identified in the paper were very comprehensive and broad reaching. The Committee noted that the paper was an initial strategic review of the situation and detailed work would

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take place over time. The Committee noted that the department had also considered the issues at a recent team meeting.

8.4 The Committee discussed communication issues relating to assured voluntary regulation. In discussion, the following points were made:

- existing registrants might perceive that their status as regulated professionals would be adversely affected by the introduction of a voluntary register;
- existing registrants might be concerned about how voluntary registers would be funded and whether the cost of introducing voluntary registers would increase pressure on registration fees;
- if there was a high-profile case about a practitioner on a voluntary register, the systems for voluntary regulation could be perceived as inadequate, with an impact on HPC's reputation;
- other countries' experience of voluntary registration might provide some learning points for HPC;
- the Council had agreed to develop further the regulatory models and the principles for establishing voluntary registers which would govern HPC's approach in this area. A paper was due to be considered at the Council meeting on 7 July 2011 but no final decisions had yet been made; and
- it would be helpful for Council members to receive briefings on the issues raised in the Command Paper as the situation became clearer.

8.5 The Committee discussed communication issues relating to regulation of practitioners supplying unlicensed herbal medicines. In discussion, the following points were made:

- 'established' professions might be concerned about the regulation of therapies which were perceived by some to be less evidence-based, ineffective or dangerous; and
- there was a need for clarity over what 'regulation' meant in this case and there were challenges of communicating exactly what was being regulated and its extent/limits. For example, regulation might not involve a requirement for HPC to approve and monitor education programmes for practitioners of herbal medicine.

8.6 The Committee discussed the extent to which HPC should differentiate the different types of regulation, for example professional statutory regulation; professional and occupation voluntary regulation; and herbal

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medicine and licensing. Some members felt that communications should explain that the different types of regulation provided different levels of assurance, while others felt that key messages should be clear and straightforward.

Item 9.11/25 Transfer of regulatory functions from General Social Care Council (report ref: CC 15/11)

- 9.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that the paper provided an update on communications activities in relation to the transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to HPC. It set out the communications work plan and provided updates on media coverage; position statements; and parliamentary activity.
- 9.3 The Committee noted that the paper included a copy of HPC's written submission to the Health and Social Care Public Bill Committee. The Committee noted that the submission stated that HPC supported the Bill. The Committee felt that future statements should make it clear that HPC supported Part 7 of the Bill, which related to the transfer of functions from GSCC to HPC. The Committee noted that the submission had been intended to give information to the Bill Committee on issues which had been identified by HPC, such as student registration; setting standards for the profession; the new name for HPC; and fitness to practise appeals for social workers.
- 9.4 The Committee noted that the paper included the communications workplan for the project. The workplan had been developed in conjunction between GSCC and HPC. The Committee noted that the Communications Department was working with colleagues at GSCC. The Committee thanked the relevant employees at the GSCC for their contribution.

Item 10.11/26 Presentation on enhancement to the online register, new aspects of website and social media

- 10.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Executive on recent enhancements to the HPC website, the online website and HPC's use of social media.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that recent enhancements to the HPC website included:
 - pages designed for particular audiences, such as registrants; employers; and journalists;
 - a re-designed events calendar, which allowed users to filter events by the type of event;
 - revised information on fitness to practise; and

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- use of RSS (Really Simple Syndication) to provide users with frequent updates as news stories were added to the website.

10.3 The Committee noted that the online register (www.hpcheck.org) had been re-designed to bring it into line with HPC's current visual identity and to improve usability. The search form had been improved, search results were clearer and the online register now showed registrants who were subject to suspension or interim suspension.

10.4 The Committee noted that HPC now had a presence on the social media websites Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. In addition, the HPC website included a blog for opinion pieces, including articles written by the Chair of Council. The Committee noted that content for social media was planned for a year ahead. The Committee noted that work on social media was currently manageable within the resources available in the Communications Department.

10.5 The Committee thanked the Executive for the presentation.

The Committee noted the following papers:

Item 11.11/27 Annual review of actions taken in 2010-11 (report ref: CC 16/11)

Item 12.11/28 Update on name change project (report ref: CC 17/11)

12.1 The Committee received a paper for information from the Executive on activities in relation to the change of the organisation's name to the Health and Care Professions Council.

Item 13.11/29 Any other business

13.1 There was no other business.

Item 14.11/30 Date and time of next meeting

14.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be held at 11.00 am on Thursday 8 November 2011 (followed by a strategy workshop). Members were invited to suggest any subjects to be covered by the workshop

14.2 Subsequent meetings would be held at 11.00 am on:
 Thursday 23 February 2012
 Wednesday 13 June 2012
 Tuesday 6 November 2012

Chair

Date

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