

**Agenda Item 14(i)**

**Enclosure 11**

**Health and Care Professions Council  
21 September 2016**

**Standards of Conduct, Performance and  
Ethics user guide**

**For discussion and approval**

**From Hollie Latham, Policy Officer**

Council, 21 September 2016

New publication for service users – ‘What should you expect from your health and care professional?’

Executive summary and recommendations

### **Introduction**

The HCPC recently published revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics. Following on from this we have produced a new guide for service users to provide information on the HCPC and what they should expect from the professionals we regulate.

In developing the guide, we commissioned research with service users and engaged with service user representative groups to help inform the style and content of the guide. This included an online ‘bulletin board’ and a small workshop.

The enclosed paper outlines the purpose of the proposed guide, provides a distribution plan and highlights in more detail the research that was undertaken to support development of the guide and when we expect to publish it.

This is a joint paper between the policy and communications departments.

### **Decision**

The Council is invited to discuss and agree the text of the publication, subject to formal legal scrutiny and ‘Plain English’ editing.

### **Background information**

- The revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics published in January 2016 (<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10004EDFStandardsofconduct,performanceandethics.pdf>)
- Existing service user leaflet <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003D4BWhoregulateshealthandsocialcareprofessionals.PDF>

### **Resource implications**

The resource implications associated with producing this publication have been accounted for in the Policy & Standards and Communication department work plans for 2016/17.

## **Financial implications**

The financial implications relating to publication and dissemination of the brochure have been accounted for in the 2016/17 Communication department budget.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Text of the publication 'What should you expect from your health and care professional?'
- Appendix 2: Report on the findings of stage one research (online bulletin board) from community research.
- Appendix 3: Report on the findings of stage two research (focus group) from community research.
- Appendix 4: Communications department communication and dissemination plan.

## **Date of paper**

9 September 2016

---

## **New publication for service users – ‘What should you expect from your health and care professional?’**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 We have produced a new guide for service users which is intended to provide information on how they should expect their health and care professional to behave and what options are available if there is a concern that a professional is not meeting our standards.
- 1.2 The new guide will replace the ‘Is your health and care professional registered?’ leaflet and will continue to be distributed in the ways listed later in this paper.
- 1.3 This paper outlines the background to development of the leaflet and plans for publication. The proposed text of the guide is attached (appendix 1)

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 We recently updated our standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPE), which set out in broad terms the behaviour expected of registrants.
- 2.2 Following on from this, we have produced an accessible guide for service users that draws from the revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics and explains what service users should expect from their registered health and care professional.
- 2.3 The guide will be printed as an eight page leaflet and will replace the current ‘Is your health and care professional registered?’ leaflet.
- 2.4 The guide will be used in a number of ways in order to engage with service users and will also raise awareness of the role of the HCPC.

### **3. Developing the guide**

- 3.1 In developing the guide, we commissioned a market research and community engagement company, Community Research, to undertake a two-phased piece of research on our behalf.
- 3.2 The benefits of the two-phased approach were that we could first identify what were the essential elements of the service user guide, and then to review that we had implemented them effectively in the finished draft of the guide.

- 3.3 The first phase of the research took place in April 2016 and involved twelve service users from across the UK, who had used the services of an HCPC-regulated professional in the last six months and represented a mix of gender, age, ethnicity, working status and socio-economic grade.
- 3.4 The participants were posed questions for discussion on an online bulletin board. These began broadly by looking at expectations in terms of the behaviour of health and care professionals, but progressed to specifics around what they would want from a service user guide on these expectations.
- 3.5 We received feedback on length, design and essential content, including which of the revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics should be signposted.
- 3.6 We used the feedback from phase one of the research to draft the version of the service user guide that would be reviewed in phase two.
- 3.7 The second phase took place in July 2016 and again involved twelve service users who met the previous requirements. They were invited to a workshop to provide page by page analysis and discussion of the first draft of the completed service user guide.
- 3.8 We gained some specific feedback on the leaflet which helped develop the final draft of the guide. Key points of this feedback included:
  - wanting the leaflet to be short and concise;
  - including information about organisations that could support service users in raising concerns; and
  - requests for more clarity on the role of the HCPC.
- 3.9 Reports on the findings of the two stages of the research are available as appendices to this paper.
- 3.10 After this phase of the research we also shared the first draft of the leaflet with service user representative organisations for feedback. This feedback was used alongside the feedback from Community Research to aid changes to the proposed guide.

#### **4. About the guide**

- 4.1 The service user guide broadly covers the areas included in the new SCPE, focussing on areas of particular importance for service users.
- 4.2 Key sections of the text include:
  - what is the HCPC;
  - what to expect from your health and care professional;
  - what should you do if you are unhappy with your HCPC registered professional;
  - what can the HCPC do; and

- useful contacts.

4.3 A draft of the text for the guide is provided at appendix 1.

4.4 The Communications Department will work with external suppliers on the design to make the guide accessible and eye-catching. This will include formatting of text and the addition of images and or illustrations.

## **5 Next steps**

5.1 We intend to publish the guide on 1 November 2016.

5.2 Before publication, the guide will be reviewed by the Plain English Campaign and a Crystal Mark obtained, ensuring the content is as clear and accessible as possible. We will also look to provide the guide in an Easy Read version as well as a bilingual English / Welsh version. Other alternative formats of the leaflet will be available on request.

5.3 The Communications Department have drafted a Communications Plan for the dissemination of the new leaflet.

5.4 We will continue to use the distribution methods that we currently use for 'Is your health and care professional registered?' with the new leaflet. These include distribution:

- as part of our waiting room distribution campaign;
- through weekly requests for public awareness packs; and
- at events that we attend.

5.5 In 2015–16 we distributed 435,725 'Is your health and care professional registered?' leaflets through the above methods (excluding those given out at events).

## **What should you expect from your health and care professional?**

[Image]

**This is a guide for service users of:**

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists / podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Hearing aid dispensers
- Occupational therapists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Social workers in England
- Speech and language therapists

A 'service user' is someone who receives care, treatment or other services from a health and care professional. This could include patients.

**The health and care professionals listed above must meet the standards set by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).**

To check that someone is on the HCPC Register visit [www.hcpc-uk.org/check](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/check)

Other professionals such as doctors, nurses and dentists are regulated by separate organisations. For a full list of other organisations in the UK which regulate different health and care professionals visit [www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/regulators/healthandcare](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/regulators/healthandcare)



This leaflet explains:

- the role of the HCPC;
- what to expect from your health and care professional; and
- what to do if you are unhappy with the care, treatment or other services you receive.

[Image]

## **What is the HCPC?**

Our role is to protect the public.

The HCPC is a regulator of health and care professions in the UK. We regulate the professions listed earlier in this leaflet. By law, people must be registered with us to work in the UK in any of these professions.

We only register people who meet our standards so that they can practise safely and effectively. We check the quality of training courses so that when someone completes one which meets our standards we can register them. We also make sure that someone who has trained outside of the UK has met our standards before we register them.

It is against the law for someone to use a title belonging to one of the professions we regulate unless they are registered with us, or to claim to be registered when they are not.

## **What to expect from your health and care professional**

All professionals on our Register must treat their service users in a way that meets our standards.

This means doing the following things.

### **Treating you as an individual**

Respecting your needs, wishes and confidentiality; and communicating with you in a way you can understand.

### **Being honest and trustworthy**

Telling you if things go wrong in your care or treatment; doing what they can to put things right; and keeping the relationship professional.

### **Putting your safety first**

Only doing what they know and understand, or referring you to another professional; learning from mistakes; and speaking up if they are concerned about your safety.

## **What should you do if you are unhappy with your HCPC registered professional?**

If you are unhappy with the care or treatment you have received, you can make a complaint to your health and care professional, or the organisation they work for. Speak to them first to see if you can settle the problem. Most issues can be dealt with in this way.

It may be possible for you to gain support in order to make a complaint. If you would like to seek support the 'Other contacts' section at the back of this leaflet provides helpful information.

## **What can the HCPC do?**

The majority of professionals on our Register practise safely and meet our standards. On the rare occasions that something goes wrong, anyone can raise a concern with us. **Our contact information is on the back of this leaflet.**

We are able to act where there are serious concerns about a health and care professional's practise or behaviour. We consider concerns raised through what we call our 'fitness to practise' process. If we find that an individual has not met our standards we may take action such as requiring a professional to practise in a certain way or to undertake further training. In the most serious cases, we can stop a professional from practising.

You can find information about the types of cases we can consider on our website:

[www.hcpc-uk.org/complaints/fitnesstopractise/scope](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/complaints/fitnesstopractise/scope)

## Other contacts

The following organisations may be useful for finding advice or support.

Action Against Medical Accidents	<p>A charity for patient safety and justice which provides free and confidential advice following a medical accident. They cover both NHS and private healthcare complaint procedures and can advise on referrals to regulatory bodies or legal action.</p> <p>Phone: 0845 123 2352</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.avma.org.uk/">www.avma.org.uk/</a></p>
Board of Community Health Council in Wales	<p>This organisation can provide you with free, confidential help if you have a problem or complaint with NHS services in Wales.</p> <p>Phone: 02920 235 558</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/899/home">www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/899/home</a></p>
Citizens Advice	<p>This service helps people deal with their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a></p>
NHS Complaints Advocacy in England	<p>A free, independent and confidential service that can help in making complaints about a National Health Service in England.</p> <p>Phone: 0300 330 5454</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org">//nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org</a></p>
Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman	<p>This organisation carries out independent investigations into complaints made about UK government departments and their agencies, and the NHS in England.</p> <p>Phone: 0345 015 4033</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.ombudsman.org.uk">www.ombudsman.org.uk</a></p>
Patient and Client Council in Northern Ireland	<p>This organisation can help you make a complaint about health and social-care services in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Phone: 0800 917 0222</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net">www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net</a></p>

<p>Patient Advice and Support Service in Scotland</p>	<p>This service provides free, confidential information, advice and support for anyone wanting to give feedback, make comments, raise concerns or make a complaint about treatment and care provided by the NHS in Scotland.</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk">www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk</a></p>
---	---

## **Further information**

For further information about our standards and fitness to practise process visit our website at [www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)

## **Contact us**

Health and Care Professions Council  
Park House,  
184 Kennington Park Road  
London  
SE11 4BU

Tel. +44 (0)300 500 6184

To request this document in Welsh or an alternative format, email [publications@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:publications@hcpc-uk.org)

## Summary report for the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) on research to inform the development of a Service User Guide

### 1. Methodology

12 service users participated in an online bulletin board discussion during a two week period from Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April until Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May. The bulletin board allowed Community Research to post a series of questions and prompts. Participants answered the questions and were also able to view each other's comments and make further comments in response. A full transcript of the bulletin board has been provided to HCPC.

#### Sample

The 12 participants were recruited to be a mix by:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Working status
- Socio-economic grade

They were recruited from across the UK and all had visited experienced the services of an HCPC regulated professional within the last 6 months.

### 2. Exploring expectations of professional behaviour

There was much consensus around participants' understanding of 'professional behaviour' and how they expected professionals to behave towards service users. Participants were clear that professionals needed to deliver user-centred services. In essence, professional behaviour was defined as:

- Speaking to service users in plain English.
- Being courteous to and respectful of the service user at all times.
- Being honest in all dealings.
- Admitting when they don't know the answer and need a second opinion.
- Adhering to service-user confidentiality.
- Being 'presentable'.

*"I would expect them to display honesty and integrity, respect my dignity and be sensitive to my needs, adhere to professional boundaries in relationships with patients, be well trained, current and*



*competent, treat me with respect and always maintain a professional demeanour in relation to dress, appearance and behaviour."*

*"I certainly would expect the professional in question to speak in terms I could fully understand. Also to be honest, especially if they needed to consult another colleague and not to just 'wing it'. One would hope they were caring, kind and treated their patients the way they would wish to be treated."*

Some participants also discussed the extent to which professional behaviour needed to be displayed within a professional's personal life, with some suggesting that professional standards should be maintained outside of the workplace. Specifically, service users found it difficult to accept advice from a health or social care professional that the professional clearly did not adhere to themselves.

*"I had a very overweight nurse telling me how to stay healthy (diet and smoking) but felt she needed to take her own advice. Professionals need to set a good example."*

### **3. Reactions to unprofessional behaviour**

Participants were asked what they would do if they felt that a health or social care professional had behaved unprofessionally. In the first instance a number of participants reported that they would speak directly to the professional involved. They explained that if they were unable to resolve the issue they would then speak with the line manager/employer of the professional in question. The desire was to achieve local resolution through an established chain of command or organisational complaints procedure. Other participants suggested they would speak directly with the manager/employer, in the first instance, to avoid direct confrontation with the professional. Most were clear that how they chose to deal with unprofessional behaviour would be dependent on how vulnerable they might feel at the time.

Some participants highlighted other organisations they perceived they could turn to if their preferred methods of reporting unprofessional behaviour proved inadequate:

- Professional bodies
- Patient representative groups (PALS)
- Relevant local authorities

When asked, more specifically, about organisations that might have responsibility for ensuring professional standards are maintained there was low awareness of regulatory bodies in general. However, a number of participants were confident they would be able to find more information via 'Google'.

*“Without doing a Google search I would not specifically know who to approach but with Google it's so easy. For Chiropractic there is the General Chiropractic Council. For Social Workers every local council has a complaints dept that specialises with their social workers.”*

*“At this precise moment I wouldn't know where to turn if I had a problem with anyone in any of these service areas, however, I would research online to establish where to go next. If I wasn't able to find anything, which is unlikely, I would approach somebody else in an associate this field if possible to establish my next contact.”*

When asked directly about the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) 4 out of the 12 participants reported that they had heard of the organisation prior to taking part in the bulletin board.

#### **4. Developing the Service User Guide**

Having been introduced to the HCPC and the professional standards, the idea of a Service User Guide was broadly welcomed by participants. However, participants were keen to emphasise that it needed to be succinct, user friendly and visually appealing; acting as a signpost to more detailed information rather than trying to cover too much within one public facing communication.

*“The idea of a service guide sounds really good, it would equip the users with information needed to make them feel safe and trust in the service they receive but on the flip side it could give some people president {sic} to 'attack' professionals if they are not doing what they want. Maybe the cynic in me. In terms of what should be in it... The basics and then places to look for further information, contact information for compliments and complaints, perhaps what the professionals have to have to be registered (this could be further information).”*

*“The creation of a service guide is a step in the right direction, which will allow people to attain information from public places, however honestly speaking I've never picked up a leaflet from a waiting room. So careful consideration needs to be taken as how to make the guide not look too cluttered with information and most importantly make it appealing.”*

*“I think it would be a great idea to have in waiting rooms and other public areas however I do think it needs to be somewhat brief with not too much info on it. Too much info and too much blurb people won't read”.*

## **Length of a Service User Guide**

In terms of length of the guide several participants suggested that 'less is more'. The general sense from the discussion was that participants would prefer a leaflet rather than a booklet:

*"I really don't think the document needs to be much more than a double sided A5."*

*"This is a good idea but it should be succinct and probably no more than 2 pages long."*

*"I do think it needs to be somewhat brief with not too much information on it. Too much information and too much blurb and people won't read."*

## **Essential content for the Service User Guide**

Participants were asked which of the Professional Standards should be covered in the Service User Guide, and more broadly (without direct reference to the Standards but keeping in mind previous discussions), what information they thought service users would like to know.

Participants revealed a strong desire to see information about:

- How to check if a professional is registered with the HCPC.
- How to make a complaint about a professional (and information about the process the HCPC undertakes for dealing with a complaint).

There was also a call for more general information:

- A list of professions regulated by the HCPC.
- An overview of what the HCPC does or a 'mission statement'.
- Contact details for the HCPC.

## **Standards to include**

It proved more difficult for participants to identify which of the Standards or element of particular Standards to include in a public facing communication. For some, all the Standards were deemed important but several participants gave more considered responses and highlighted the following:

- That, with certain exceptions, any information you share with a professional is confidential (within Standard 5.)
- How to report concerns about safety (alluding to Standard 7 but interpreting it as how the public raise a concern about safety.)
- The need for service users to have given consent to any treatment or care received (within Standard 1.)

- That service users must be referred to another practitioner if the care, treatment or other services they need are beyond the scope of the professional's practice (within Standard 3.)
- That some element of a case/care maybe delegated by the professional responsible for overall care (alluding to Standard 4.)
- Everything is recorded (alluding to Standard 10.)

### **Look and feel of the Service User Guide**

Participants explained that the guide needs to stand out in a busy public place. They called for the use of a bold and simple colour palette and a title (accompanied by a picture) that grabbed the attention of the public and communicated at a glance the purpose of the guide.

*"I think far too many user guides follow a stereotypical format with the result that the reader soon gets bored and misses the message. I think this user guide should be short, sharp and to the point making use of vibrant colours, bold character fonts and bullet points in order to draw the reader to its content. Readers can obtain detailed information by accessing the website."*

*"The Service User Guide needs to be bold in colour and have a direct message on the front cover."*

However, one participant felt that achieving stand out may not be the priority, depending on the intended target audience:

*"I have been thinking hard about this question and it's a really tough one, how to make something different from all the rest. The conclusions I came to were: 1. It doesn't really need to stand out, it's an information leaflet giving people help to better understand the service they are using and will more than likely be used by people who are already seeking out further information; 2. to make it a good leaflet which is service user friendly I would say the language needs to be really simple with any complex terms explained, it needs to have supporting pictures to help demonstrate the context to make it accessible and it needs to use plain and basic colours and clear fonts."*

What is clear is that participants wanted the guide to be accessible to all and provide easily digestible information rather than long paragraphs of text.

*"A leaflet would have to be simple, clear and concise, so much so that the information can easily be grasped by most people of the intellectual spectrum. I find the use of pictures, simple charts and*

*bullet points to be more appealing as they are straight to the point, rather a paragraph after paragraph of information."*

### **Learnings from other publications**

Participants were shown Service User Guides published by the General Dental Council (GDC) and the General Medical Council (GMC) and most expressed strong preference for the GDC publication – 'Smile'. Although there were still some reservations about the length of the publication and whether the HCPC Service User Guide would need to be as long.

*"General Dental Council. I found this leaflet to be quiet appealing, although there are a few pages to get through, the use of illustration, bullet points and subheadings actually making it look less cluttered than it really is."*

*"The GDC leaflet is far superior. It has an excellent first page. The different colour typefaces on the same page makes for variety and keeps the reader interested. The information seems more concise and relevant. The Service User Guide wouldn't need to so verbose ....."*

Within the GDC publication participants were particularly positive about:

- Use of images.
- Coloured text.
- Bullet points.
- Question and answer style format.
- Reference to Citizens Advice.



## Summary report

### *Research to inform the development of a Service User Guide*

#### *Stage 2*

*15th July 2016*

## 1. Introduction

### **Background and objectives**

The HCPC is in the processes of writing a service user guide to reflect its recently revised Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. In order to inform the development of this guide, HCPC commissioned a two-staged research approach to provide some insight into the public perspective.

- Stage 1: Research to inform the purpose, objective and outline of the service user guide took place in April 2016.
- Stage 2: Research to review the actual content of the draft service user guide in July 2016.

This is the summary report for Stage 2 of the research.

### **Methodology**

12 service users participated in a 1.5 hour group discussion in London (Brixton) on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016. Discussions were facilitated by Community Research and followed a pre-agreed discussion guide based on a draft (unformatted) version of the service user guide.

The discussion guide and draft service user guide can be found in the Appendices of this report, alongside the sample profile of participants.

At points during the discussion, participants were asked to individually mark the draft service user guide with green and red pens to indicate those words, phrases or sections which they particularly liked or disliked.

It should be noted that the findings of this research report are based on one group discussion only.

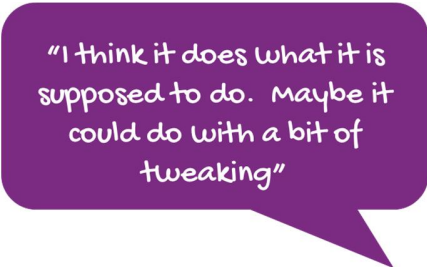
## Sample

The 12 participants were recruited to be a mix of:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Working status
- Socio-economic grade

They were recruited from the London area and all had visited a relevant professional within the last 12 months.

## 2. Summary of findings



*"I think it does what it is supposed to do. Maybe it could do with a bit of tweaking"*

The draft service user guide successfully conveys key messages around what to expect from professionals, how to make a complaint and where to go to for further help and advice. It is considered to be easy to read, a manageable length and to be written in a professional and reassuring tone.

However, as it currently stands, it may not do enough in the initial pages to convey the role and authority of the HCPC to those who are unaware of the organisation and unfamiliar with professional regulators. Furthermore, additional information could be provided in the section entitled 'What can the HCPC do?' to outline when the public should be making a complaint to the HCPC.

There is also scope to:

- Improve on the title of the guide so that resonates more strongly with service users.
- Expand on 'the standards' when they are first mentioned, especially in relation to training.
- Include links to further information in the initial pages.
- Make more use of powerful language such as 'protect the public'.

Any changes to the guide would need to be made without significantly adding to the length of the guide.

### 3. Key findings

#### Low awareness of HCPC raises questions

Participants were unaware of the HCPC prior to attending the group discussion and reading the draft service user guide. Therefore, an initial read through of the guide raised several questions about the HCPC, including:

- Do they regulate private and/or NHS based professionals?
- Do **all** professionals working within the listed professions have to be registered?
- Is the HCPC an established organisation?
- How does the HCPC ensure that registered professionals have received adequate training?

*"I think a bit more information about who the HCPC are. If I picked up this leaflet, I was reading it for the first time, and it just says it's a regulator of health and care professionals. That's what it says about them."*

#### Need to communicate the role of the HCPC at the outset

Due to low awareness of the HCPC most participants called for the introduction to provide them with more information about the role of the HCPC as a regulatory organisation. They were keen for an initial section to explain:

- The HCPC is there to protect the public.
- The professional standards the HCPC is seeking to uphold.
- The HCPC has the power to stop a professional from practising.
- The HCPC maintains a list of registered professionals.

Interestingly, without being aware of the GDC Smile publication, participants appeared to request the same level of detail and reassurance that the GDC guide offers within its initial pages. See figure 1.




**Figure 1 – Extract from SMILE (GDC service user guide)**

The General Dental Council is the UK's dental regulator. Our role is to protect dental patients. We were set up by Parliament but are independent of the Government and the NHS. By law, dental professionals (both NHS and private) must be registered with us to work in the UK.

**We regulate all dental professionals:**

- clinical dental technicians;
- dental hygienists;
- dental nurses;
- dental technicians;
- dental therapists;
- dentists; and
- orthodontic therapists.



Dental professionals on our register must meet our high standards. Dental professionals must:

- put patients' interests first;
- communicate effectively with patients;
- get valid permission from patients to carry out treatment;
- maintain and protect patients' information;
- have a clear and effective complaints procedure;
- work with colleagues in a way that serves the interests of patients;
- maintain, develop and work within their professional knowledge and skills;
- raise concerns if patients are at risk; and
- make sure their personal behaviour maintains patients' confidence in them and the dental profession.

We make sure that dental professionals continue to put your interests first throughout their careers by insisting on proof of continuing professional development. We take action when our standards aren't being met.

### **Provide more guidance on when it is appropriate to raise a concern with the HCPC**

What to do if unhappy with treatment is covered in the guide. However, participants called for further information about when it is appropriate to make a complaint to the HCPC. They recognised that there is a balance to be struck between getting the public to speak up and ensuring that the right sort of complaints come through.

### **Service user guide is an acceptable length**

It was difficult for participants to assess the length of the guide in draft format. However, most felt that it was 'long enough'. Therefore, whilst participants called for greater clarification about the role of HCPC they did not want this to extend the length of the guide.

*"But equally, I think how detailed you really want a leaflet to be, because I thought that that was quite a nice, easy skim. I gained trust from it, support, reassurance. It's like, well, what else do you really want from a leaflet? Do you know what I mean? You don't want to get bogged down by all the details."*

*"I think it's quite long already."*

### **How to obtain a service user guide**

In an ideal world participants felt that the guide could be handed out by a GP if they intended to refer a patient to a particular service. In reality, most believed that the publication would be found in health and care professionals' waiting rooms. With this in mind, they felt that the title needed to work hard to attract the attention of service users and that supporting posters could be used to help draw attention to the guide.

*"Well, I think the point about the GP being the first port of call, taking the initiative and handing these out as a matter of good practice, is a really good one."*

### **4. Initial impressions of the service user guide**

Initial impressions of the guide were generally favourable and all participants were able to take out key messages within the guide on the first read through. These messages can be summarised as:

- Raising awareness of HCPC.
- What to expect from a service provider/professional.
- How to complain about a professional.
- Signposting to further help and support.

*"I think it was easy to read. It's faced at everybody's level. Yes, it's straightforward and easy to read."*

More detailed responses relating to the initial 'take out' from the service user guide included:

*"Information about the register to explain what HCPC is for and how it can protect patients. Also information about other similar service."*

*"HCPC is a regulator for health and care professionals for the service users and someone to go to in need of treatment or complaint."*

*"The leaflet is to make the service users aware that there is a regulatory body for the services listed. It also states what they should expect from their service providers and what to do if they are unhappy with the service."*

*"Your rights and what to expect from them as a service provider. Who to contact for more advice and information."*

*"About HCPC. Rights as a patient. Expectations. Procedures."*

*"Rights for patients regarding health care professionals. What should you do if you feel mistreated. How patients should expect to be treated if visiting a health care professional."*

*"This is a regulatory company. To help people with issues with their healthcare practitioner, if they are not getting anywhere when dealing with them directly. They also help you to know what to expect of your healthcare practitioner."*

*"HCPC is a regulatory body for the protection of service users: Safety, Registered professionals, how to complain if things go wrong OR if not getting appropriate treatment."*

*"Clear contact details. Follow up details of more than one agency. Support and Advice."*

*"Patient leaflet. HCPC guide. Information booklet for checking the register."*

However, as mentioned within Section 3, all participants were unaware of the HCPC prior to attending the group discussion and therefore, for some, an initial read through of the guide also raised questions about the role of the HCPC and a call for further information.

## **5. Focus on individual sections and pages**

### **5.1 Title page**

Participants felt that the title of the guide needed to reach out and speak directly to service users. They asked for a question rather than a statement, in keeping with title pages within the guide. For example, "What should/can you expect from your health and care professional?" rather than "What to expect from your health and care professional".

*"I think that's great, either your GP personally tells you about it, or you need to change the title, because I wouldn't pick up a leaflet with that title. I don't know, it just felt as if it needs to be spelt out a little bit, telling me what it's all about."*

*"So that leaflet needs to be clear that it's for the purpose of the complaints or whatever, so basically, then people know when they want to complain that it's right there."*

*"It's not striking enough, what to expect from your healthcare professional"*

Participants also emphasised that the title needs to be visually eye-catching in large, bold print. They suggested that any imagery used needed to play a supporting role rather than be relied upon to draw attention to the guide – it was the title itself that needed to speak out.

## 5.2 Introduction to the service user guide (Pages 2 and 3)

Aside from participants' desire to have more detail about the HCPC in the initial pages of the service user guide, there were several more specific comments about the introductory section.

### **This is a guide for service users of:**

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists / podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Hearing aid dispensers
- Occupational therapists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Social workers in England
- Speech and language therapists

A 'service user' is someone who receives care, treatment or other services from a health and care professional.

**The health and care professionals listed above must meet the standards set by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).**

### ***Some professional titles are unfamiliar***

Unsurprisingly, not all participants were familiar with the range of professionals listed on page 2. However, most assumed that less familiar titles would resonate with those who were using that particular service. Professions which were most unfamiliar to participants were:

- Clinical scientists
- Biomedical scientists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Orthotists
- Podiatrists

Some participants suggested that the list should not be alphabetised but rather the most common professions (likely to have the greatest number of service users) should appear at the top of the list so that the guide would appear more immediately relevant to a greater number of people. However, not everyone agreed with this suggestion.

### ***Explanation of service user is welcomed***

Participants naturally thought of themselves as 'patients' rather than 'service users' and, therefore, the explanation of a service user on page 2 is welcomed.

*"I like the idea of service users, and then underneath here it's got: Service user is... It's got an explanation of what a service user is."*

*"Can't you just put that this is a guide for patients of these things, rather than service user?"*

### ***Potential to expand upon why social workers in the devolved nations are excluded***

Several participants picked up on the fact that the guide was for service users of 'Social Workers in England'. They suggested that a footnote be used to explain why social workers elsewhere in the UK were not included in the list. Particularly, when on page 4 some noted that 'The HCPC is a regulator of health and care professions **in the UK**'.

*"You see, it says here HCPC is the regulator of health and care professionals in the UK. But then the other line it was actually saying in England."*

### ***Introductory section to include a link to the HCPC register***

Many felt that in the introductory section there should be a link to the HCPC register so that service users would know how to determine whether or not their provider was a registered health and care professional. They explained that this would enable them to determine whether the rest of the guide was relevant to them but that it would also reinforce the role of the HCPC. In essence, they called for the further information section to be moved forwards.

### ***Standards to be explained when they are first mentioned***

Referring to 'standards' on the first page, without any further explanation of what the standards were raised some initial questions. Participants went on to find more satisfactory information on page 4 when they read 'We only register people who meet our standards for their training, skills and behaviour'. However, an earlier expansion of standards might help in establishing the role of the HCPC and negate some of the initial questions.

*"I guess it does say that you have to meet the standards of the HCPC, but it doesn't actually say what their standards are."*

### 5.3 What is the HCPC? (Page 4)

Participants felt that the section entitled 'What is the HCPC?' offered some key information.

#### **What is the HCPC?**

The HCPC is a regulator of health and care professions in the UK. Our role is to protect the public.

By law, health and care professionals must be registered with us to work in the UK in any of the professions listed on page 2.

We only register people who meet our standards for their training, skills and behaviour.

It is against the law for someone to use a title belonging to one of the professions we regulate unless they are registered with us, or to claim to be registered when they are not.

The phrase '**Our role is to protect the public**' and language such as '**it is against the law**' were thought to be both powerful and reassuring and helped clarify the role of a regulatory organisation.

*"I think one of the most important sentences comes at the start: Our role is to protect the public. You could put that in bold on the pamphlet. It's really such a powerful thing. That's exactly what they're there for, and I think it's a very strong statement."*

*"I agree, I think the use of language: protect the public, registered, meet our standards; it's all very reassuring".*

A number of participants believed that it is these key messages that should appear earlier in the guide.

*"I think some of these words should be on the front page as well, on the title page. Instead of just having what to expect, you can have some of these on the side, saying: We're here to protect the public. That would make you want to read it more."*

Whilst the section was generally well comprehended some participants did want to know more about the standards and how the HCPC ensured that registrants met 'our standards for training, skills and behaviour'. Reassuring participants about standards of training was considered particularly key, as training was perceived to be variable across both professions and individual professionals.

*"I think, for myself, they didn't highlight what level that their healthcare professionals are trained to. Because you can go to any healthcare or social place and they'll say, 'Oh yes, we have officers and stuff', but they've only done a six-hour training programme, where they've read the policies and safeguarding practices, and it's not, for me, guaranteed that you are actually trained according to a specific level standard, whether it's degree, or whatever it may be. That's not highlighted in here, what level their professionals are actually trained to."*

*"I'm just getting a bit picky, because we're going into it, and I have to keep on bringing myself back and think it's only a leaflet. But our standards, whose standards are they?"*

It may help if the link to the standards on the HCPC website is moved towards the beginning of the guide.

#### **5.4 What to expect from your health and care professional? (Page 5)**

##### **What to expect from your health and care professional**

All professionals on our register must treat their patients and service users in a way that meets our standards.

This means doing the following things.

##### **Treating you as an individual**

Respecting your needs, wishes and confidentiality; and communicating with you in a way you can understand.

##### **Being honest and trustworthy**

Telling you if things go wrong in your care or treatment; doing what they can to put things right; and learning from mistakes.

##### **Putting your safety first**

Only doing what they know and understand, or referring you to another professional; and speaking up if they are concerned about your safety.

Participants were generally happy with the content:

*"It's clear, because basically, it tells you - it informs you of what to expect, and what standards to expect."*

However, a minority of participants suggested that 'Treating you as an individual', 'being honest and trustworthy' and 'putting your safety first' were rather generic, suggesting that it is the corresponding text below these headings that is more compelling and could be further highlighted in the formatting of the service user guide.

*"It does gel with me, but it is a truism, as you say, you would expect it of any walk of life."*

## 5.5 What should you do if you are unhappy with your experience? (Page 6)

### **What should you do if you are unhappy with your experience?**

If you are unhappy with the care or treatment you have received, you can make a complaint to your health and care professional, or the organisation they work for. Speak to them first to see if you can settle the problem. Most issues can be dealt with in this way.

All participants understood the text and felt that it was common sense to direct any initial complaint directly to the health and care professional in question, or the organisation they worked for.

However, some participants questioned whether there were alternative routes for making a complaint that should be considered before contacting the HCPC.

*"Is there not like another avenue? Like you speak to the person, your health professional first, then do you not go to like the patient liaison service, or something like that, before you would go to these people?"*

*"Yes, like that kind of just says speak to them first and then go there. It's not talking about so much that they're the last resort, really. It's like whenever I've used a governing body before, say Ofcom or something like that, and you try every avenue before you go to - you threaten them of the governing body. That's what you normally do, you threaten."*



## 5.6 What can the HCPC do? (Page 6)

### What can the HCPC do?

The majority of professionals on the HCPC Register practise safely and meet our standards. On the rare occasions that something goes wrong, anyone can raise a concern with us. **Our contact information is on the back of this leaflet.**

We are able to act where there are serious concerns about a health and care professional's practise or behaviour. We consider concerns raised through what we call our 'fitness to practise' process. We can take action such as requiring a professional to practise in a certain way or to undertake further training. In the most serious cases, we can stop a professional from practising.

Participants were impressed that 'in the most serious cases, we [HCPC] can **stop** a professional from practising'. They regarded it as another powerful message that helped explain the role of the HCPC.

However, a show of hands revealed that all participants felt that it would be useful to have more information about when it is appropriate, and at what point the public should be contacting the HCPC. They recognised that there was a balance to be struck between encouraging members of the public to come forward with complaints about professionals and making complaints that would be below the threshold of the HCPC.

*"They maybe need to make it more implicit that if there were issues, although you should settle it with the organisation they work for, there was maybe a need to stress that they would take on the organisation that they work for if there were serious problems, or if it needed to be escalated. I don't think it's implicit in that."*

*"I think they should add one more short paragraph just saying when to contact the HCPC."*

*"I think it is clear what it's saying, but it's just at what point do you actually contact them at?"*

One or two participants also believed that more could be written to encourage the public to make complaints about professionals. They felt the public may feel intimidated by a professional and, as a service user receiving treatment, may not feel well enough to make a complaint.

*"I was wondering whether they could add...that they could say it's really important if you have a concern, to keep standards high,*

*because a lot of these things people are accessing, there's a lot of emotion around them, and sometimes they sort of walk away and they feel I just can't deal with this, but it's important that we do actually report any anomalies to keep that standard up. But sometimes people think, well, I just really can't be bothered. But to know that it's an important role of the public to actually contact them if they think things have not gone as they should."*

## 5.7 Other contacts and further information (Pages 7 and 8)

There were few comments about the contact page and participants seemed to welcome the information as useful signposting. Two participants particularly welcomed the link to the full list of regulators on the HCPC website.

<b>Other contacts</b>	
<p>There are a number of other organisations in the UK which regulate different health and care professionals. For a full list of these visit <a href="http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/regulators/healthandcare">www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/regulators/healthandcare</a></p> <p>The following organisations may also be useful for finding advice or support.</p>	
Board of Community Health Council in Wales	<p>This organisation can provide you with free, confidential help if you have a problem or complaint with NHS services in Wales.</p> <p>Phone: 02920 235 558</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/899/home">www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/899/home</a></p>
Citizens Advice	<p>This service helps people deal with their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a></p>
NHS Complaints Advocacy in England	<p>A free, independent and confidential service that can help in making complaints about a National Health Service in England.</p> <p>Phone: 0300 330 5454</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org">//nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org</a></p>
Northern Ireland Patient and Client Council	<p>This organisation can help you make a complaint about health and social-care services in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Phone: 0800 917 0222</p> <p>Website: <a href="http://www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net">www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net</a></p>
Patient Advice and Support Service in Scotland	<p>This service provides free, confidential information, advice and support for anyone wanting to give feedback, make comments, raise concerns or make a complaint about treatment and care provided by the NHS in Scotland.</p>

### Further information

Check that someone is on the HCPC Register: [www.hcpc-uk.org/check](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/check)

Further information about our standards and fitness to practise process: [www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)

The types of cases the HCPC can consider: [www.hcpc-uk.org/complaints/fitnesstopractise/scope](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/complaints/fitnesstopractise/scope)

### Contact us

Health and Care Professions Council  
Park House,  
184 Kennington Park Road  
London  
SE11 4BU  
Tel. +44 (0)300 500 6184

To request this document in Welsh or an alternative format, email [publications@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:publications@hcpc-uk.org)

Participants gave more thought to the 'Further information section' and several suggested that the information in this section should appear towards the beginning of the guide.

They believed that being able to check that someone is on the HCPC register was key.

They felt that, if the professional was not on the HCPC register, information about expected standards and how to complain about them would not be relevant.

They also believed that providing the links earlier in the guide may help address some of the questions about the role HCPC and the standards it expects professionals to uphold.

*"Where there's further information, check that someone's on their register, I feel that should have been at the beginning"*

*"These days you look at everything online, so you might have the website up straightaway so you can just go straight there if you want to have a look at it, rather than wading through..."*

*"I don't think it's a huge leaflet to flick through, but I take the point that you might have a complaint to make, that involves somebody who is on the register - you know, it's swings and roundabouts, it's not huge for me. I can understand the reasons for putting it a wee bit nearer up"*

## 6. Appendices

### 6.1 Sample profile

<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	6
Female	6
<b>Age group</b>	
18-29	3
30-49	3
50-64	3
65+	3
<b>Ethnic background</b>	
BME Background	5
<b>Working status</b>	
Employed	At least 6
Unemployed	1
Retired	2
Other	At least 2
<b>Social grade</b>	
AB	3
C1	3
C2	3
DE	3
<b>Health / care professional attended</b>	
Art therapist	Recruit a mix
Chiropodist/podiatrist	
Dietician	
Hearing aid dispenser	
Occupational therapist	
Paramedic	
Physiotherapist	
Practitioner psychologist	
Radiographer	
Social worker	
Speech and language therapist	

### 6.2 Discussion guide and draft service user guide



Group discussion  
guide.doc



Draft service user  
guide content

**Communications activities – dissemination of service user guide:  
What should you expect from your health and care professional?**

Headline activities	Lead team
Publish the guide on the HCPC website and add spotlight on the home page	Publishing
Issue press release to relevant professional body media, consumer press and service user media	Media
Publish news story on the website	Publishing
Undertake stakeholder e-mailing to relevant professional and service user organisations with information about the guide and links to the document	Stakeholder
Highlight in relevant edition of Issues Brief	Stakeholder
Publish article about the guide and why we have produced it in relevant edition of HCPC In Focus	Publishing
Update relevant section of website with new guidance	Web
Commence programme of social media messages	Media
Ensure copies of the guidance at all HCPC events and relevant conferences, exhibitions and talks	Events
Publish news item on the intranet	Internal communications
Q1 2017, commence waiting room distribution campaign	Media / Publishing