

**THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL**

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**PROFESSIONAL LIAISON GROUP FOR STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY**

MINUTES of the third meeting of the Professional Liaison Group for Standards of Proficiency held at **11.00 a.m. on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2006** at Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

**PRESENT:**

Mr P Acres  
 Mrs M Clark-Glass (Chairman)  
 Mrs S Drayton  
 Ms M Embleton  
 Mr M English  
 Dr S Gosling  
 Mrs D Haggerty  
 Mrs J Pearce  
 Mr G Sutehall  
 Professor D Waller

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms S Butcher, Secretary to the PLG  
 Mr M Guthrie, Policy Officer  
 Mr N Jackson, Opinion Leader Research  
 Miss L Sparham, Opinion Leader Research  
 Miss S Taylor, Opinion Leader Research  
 Ms R Tripp, Policy Manager (part)

**Item 1.06/14 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting and the representatives from Opinion Leader Research (OLR) who were to report back their findings on the qualitative review of HPC Standards of Proficiency (SoPs).

**Item 2.06/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Miss P Sabine and Mrs A Turner.

**Item 3.06/16 APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- 3.1 The Group approved the agenda subject to some re-ordering of the papers. The Group agreed that items 8 and 9 should be taken last after the preceding items for discussion. Item 12 was to be swapped around with item 11.

**Item 4.06/17 MINUTES OF THE SOPS PLG MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2006**

- 4.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the second meeting of the Professional Liaison Group for the Standards of Proficiency (SoP) be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment at 1.1:- 'Mr English reported that he was also Chairman of the Executive Committee of the London Network of 74 NHS Patients' Forums'.

**Item 5.06/18 MATTERS ARISING**

- 5.1 Item 9.2 – Fitness to Practise Panel Chairmen Questionnaire  
The Group noted that a questionnaire had been devised for the fitness to practise panel Chairmen. The feedback gathered was enclosed for the Groups consideration.
- 5.2 Item 10.6 – Introduction to the SoPs  
The Group noted that the introduction to the SoPs had been revised subject to their recommendations and was on the agenda for their information.
- 5.3 Item 11.7 – Assessment of Registration Assessors Questionnaires  
The Group noted that a definitive assessment of the registration assessor questionnaires had been provided for their information.
- 5.4 Item 11.8 – Education Providers Feedback  
The Group noted that feedback was currently being collated from education providers on the Standards.

**Item 6.06/19 PRESENTATION FROM OPINION LEADER RESEARCH**

- 6.1 The Group received a presentation from representatives of Opinion Leader Research (OLR) on the qualitative review of HPC Standards of Proficiency.

- 6.2 The Group noted that the research had been conducted across all of the professions which HPC regulated. A focus group methodology was employed and consisted of 8 group discussions with 6-8 people per group. Groups were conducted in London, Swansea, Glasgow and Birmingham but not in Northern Ireland. The Group agreed that Northern Ireland should have been included in the research and represented a serious omission due to the requirements of the HPO 2001 to include all of the four home countries. This had not been achieved due to the small timescale in which the research was to be undertaken.
- 6.3 The overall results of the research found that health professionals were not fully engaged with the SoPs and associated them more as a reference material for the general public than as a resource for themselves. Most health professionals felt that they operated above the threshold standards laid out in the SoPs and that they were perceived as too basic. The SoPs were the least recognised by contrast to the standards as set out by their professional bodies with which a more positive association was identified.
- 6.4 The Group were especially concerned that students in their last year of studying and in their first year of practice had conveyed such attitudes towards the SoPs. The Group wished to ascertain just how representative the research findings were as they had far reaching consequences for the direction of the review as a whole. Concern was specifically expressed around the small sample groups utilised and therefore on what basis general assumptions could be drawn. The Group agreed that often anecdotal evidence was accumulated in such research when health professionals referred to their own personal experiences of inter-departmental happenings. Mr Jackson (OLR) reported that he would investigate the level of consistency in the responses received and provide a report for the Group to review at its next meeting.

**Action: NJ (OLR)**

- 6.5 The Group agreed that if the research findings were found to show conclusive evidence of this overall consensus of opinion measures needed to be taken. The concept of self regulation for example needed to be reinforced and was recommended as a piece of strategy work for the Council as a whole. The importance of forging closer working relationships with the professional bodies would prove vital in the successful communication of the SoPs and their purpose in the career of a health professional. The Group agreed that the research was very useful and though anecdotal at this stage had highlighted some potential key issues.

**Item 7.06/20 THE STANDARDS AND LANGUAGE**

- 7.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer, Mr Guthrie.
- 7.2 The Group noted that the language used in the Standards was driven by the requirements of the Health Professions Order 2001. Legal advice received was that the existing wording was necessary because of the primary role of standards as threshold standards for entry to the register. The Group found this advice problematic, particularly given the role of the standards in continuing registration. The Group requested further clarification.
- 7.3 The Group discussed the verbs contained in the SoPs such as ‘understand’, ‘recognise’, ‘know’ and ‘be able to’ and agreed that these did not significantly convey an image of protecting the public. Feedback obtained from the OLR research indicated that health professionals were unsure about the link between the SoPs and other Standards. The Group agreed that trying to marry up the SoPs with the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics for example was problematic.
- 7.4 The Group requested that Jonathan Bracken, Parliamentary Agent, Bircham Dyson Bell was invited to their next meeting in April so to clarify the legal advice given and terminologies utilized. In particular the Group agreed that the term ‘threshold standards’ needed to be revised. Most health professionals strove to exceed such standards and were not just a requirement of entry to the profession but rather were Standards to be continually met throughout a health professional’s career. The Group agreed that the outcome of the Foster and Donaldson review would significantly contribute to the direction of this work in the long term.

**Action: SB/MG**

**Item 8.06/21 THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY TO OTHER STANDARDS**

- 8.1 The Group received a paper for information from the Policy Officer, Mr Guthrie.
- 8.2 The Group noted that it had requested at its last meeting that a paper was written detailing the relationship between the SoPs to the other Standards published by Council.
- 8.3 The Group noted that the Council produced four sets of Standards; the Standards of Proficiency (SoPs), Standards of Education and Training

(SETS), the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (SCPE) and the Standards of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The Group noted that further information regarding all of the standards could be posted on the HPC website and a welcome pack provided for all new registrants. The Group agreed that this would help to clarify the inter-relationships between the standards further. The Group requested that the Policy Officer produce a draft document which showed how the generic standards might be reworded without the use of such constructions as 'understand' and 'be able to' Subject to the legal advice received by HPC's legal advisor at their next meeting, the Group would therefore be able to ascertain which was the most appropriate. The Group recommended that the document should also make reference to the stance of the other regulatory bodies in the production of their Standards. The Group noted that other regulators had standards of practice and codes of conduct which did not always correlate significantly to the HPC standards and that this must be taken into consideration.

**Action: MG**

**Item 9.06/22 INTRODUCTION TO THE STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY**

- 9.1 The Group received a paper for discussion by the Policy Officer, Mr Guthrie.
- 9.2 The Group noted that the introduction to the SoPs had been revised following the review of feedback given at its last meeting. The Policy Officer asked members to e-mail him with any further additional changes that they may require.

**Action: SoPs PLG members**

- 9.3 The Group discussed the introduction in brief and recommended a revision to the sentence (under page 2) '*...taking care of yourself*'. The Group agreed that it was not suitable and failed to convey the right message which was that the health professional was responsible for ensuring that they practiced safely and effectively. The definition given on p9 of Enclosure 10 was recommended as a possible replacement: - '*When we say that you are fit to practice we mean that you have the health and character as well as the necessary skills and knowledge to do your job safely and effectively. We also mean that we trust you to act legally*'. The Group agreed that the word '*think*' should also be removed from (under page 2) '*where we **think** this is helpful*' and replaced with 'we consider'. The introduction would also be reviewed in line with the feedback received from the OLR research, which was that the document would be better received with shorter punchier sentences.

**Action: MG****Item 10.06/23 PANEL CHAIRMEN QUESTIONNAIRES**

- 10.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer, Mr Guthrie.
- 10.2 The Group noted that all panel Chairmen had been invited to participate in a questionnaire about the standards. There were 4 registrant panel Chairmen and 11 lay panel Chairmen in total but only 8 responses were received to the questionnaire. The Group were dismayed by the lack of response but agreed that panel Chairmen and members would more readily participate to a review of the SCPE which was the document that they consistently referred to in case proceedings.
- 10.3 The feedback received was generally positive and indicated that the standards were useful tools against which to judge the performance of registrants.

**Item 11.06/24 VISITORS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

- 11.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer, Mr Guthrie.
- 11.2 The Group noted that visitors had been asked to participate in a questionnaire about the standards. Responses were received from 38 visitors but overall were not substantive. 2 months had been given to provide this information. The Group noted that HPC had a number of visitors who had not been trained or used due to the profession of which they were a part which regulated usage and was therefore a contributory factor to the response rate. The Group noted that some feedback had highlighted the need to ensure that education providers clearly mapped course content and outcomes against the SoPs.

**Item 12.06/25 PROFESSIONAL BODIES QUESTIONNAIRES**

- 12.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer Mr Guthrie.
- 12.2 The Group noted that professional bodies had been invited to participate in a questionnaire about the Standards. Responses were expected from Chiropodists/Podiatrists but responses had not yet been received from Prosthetists/Orthotists. The questionnaire had been devised to look at consistency across the Standards and no changes had been recommended other than considering the best use of terminology.

- 12.3 The Group agreed that the viewpoints of the professional bodies would be examined in greater depth at their next meeting.

**Item 13.06/26 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK**

- 13.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer Mr Guthrie.
- 13.2 The Group noted the feedback which the registrant members of this PLG had submitted regarding the registration assessors' questionnaires.

**Item 14.06/27 REVISED WORKPLAN**

- 14.1 The Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer Mr Guthrie.
- 14.2 The Group reviewed the work plan and what they had achieved to date. An introduction had now been produced. The introduction was subject to further revision, incorporating the comments of the group and to emphasise the role of the professional bodies in promoting and representing their members and in producing guidance. The Group was in agreement that the summary should now be removed. As a result, it was felt that the introduction should clearly explain that some of the standards were generic across all professions, whilst others were specific only to certain professions. A full written report was to be produced by OLR and would be a paper to note at the next meeting. An electronic version would be e-mailed to all members prior to their next meeting.

**Action: MG**

- 14.3 The Group would also be reviewing the education provider questionnaires at their next meeting and looked forward to the production of the SoPs documents in their entirety. The Policy Officer would produce 12 draft copies of the new standards for the group's discussion at the next meeting. The Policy Officer would as far as possible attempt to provide the Group with draft copies of all of the SoPs prior to their next meeting.

**Action: MG**

**Item 15.06/28 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

15.1 There was no other business.

**Item 16.06/29 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

16.1 The next meeting of the Group would be held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2006 and was agreed would finish at 3:30pm with lunch provided in between.

16.2 The last meeting of the Group would take place on:

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006

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