

Communications Committee 23 June 2010

Informing parliamentarians and related stakeholders about the HPC's public protection role

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This paper provides a high level summary for the Communications Committee of the work undertaken by the Executive to inform parliamentarians and related stakeholders about the HPC's public protection role.

Decision

The Committee is asked to discuss the attached document.

Background information

See paper.

Resource implications

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

Financial implications

As above.

Appendices

Informing parliamentarians and related stakeholders about the HPC's public protection role.

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Introduction

This paper provides a high level summary for the Communications Committee of the work undertaken by the Executive to inform parliamentarians and related stakeholders about the HPC's public protection role.

Background

In carrying out our UK-wide role we work closely with a number of other organisations and individuals including professional bodies, government, employers and patient groups. The HPC has a statutory responsibility to inform and educate the public and registrants of the work it does. It also has a statutory duty to consult with stakeholders on a number of issues, including, for instance, the setting of standards or the issuing of guidance. The work undertaken by the HPC informing parliamentarians and related stakeholders is focused on delivering these statutory responsibilities.

The communications strategy sets out our objective 'to inform key stakeholders of the HPC's public protection role through ongoing dialogue and engagement' and our annual workplan clearly sets out the activities we will undertake to work towards achieving this objective. It is inherent in our communications strategy that we undertake work which is targeted and proportionate to our role as a statutory regulator.

This paper focuses on our work with parliamentarians and related stakeholders and provides further detail to the activities set out in section 3.2 in the workplan.

Activities

The following is a list of activities with information about each.

- **Monitoring**

We undertake daily monitoring of activities across government, in Westminster and the devolved administrations. This is managed through Dods Monitoring. It covers issues raised in the parliaments as well as activities of key stakeholder groups (eg other regulators and professional bodies) across a range of matters. It includes the professions we currently regulate as well as new professions and wider topics and issues relevant to the HPC.

The purpose of monitoring is to keep the Executive fully informed of the work of parliament to ensure that we are able to engage effectively with parliamentarians and related stakeholders across a wide range of matters.

The main way in which we disseminate this information internally is via a weekly Issues Brief that pulls together key data and is circulated to EMT. We have frequent meetings with Dods Monitoring to review their service provision. Most recently, the Stakeholder Communications Manager has revised our monitoring lists to broaden the range of monitoring information that we are receiving. This has led to an increase of information into the HPC.

The Stakeholder Communications Manager is currently researching monitoring tools and resources for further engagement with the European Parliament.

- **Briefings**

Briefings are written when there is a specific reason to do so, for example: to support the passage of section 60 legislation through Holyrood and Westminster; when there is a major organisational activity that merits further briefing; or when issues are raised in Parliament or beyond that the HPC needs to address as part of its responsibility to inform and educate about its statutory role.

The first briefing paper to Parliamentarians was in January 2008 and was sent to 100 Peers and 150 MPs with an interest in health. It was effectively a first introduction and provided information about the HPC, background to the White Paper and was linked to the secondary legislation (Health Care and Associated Professions (Miscellaneous Amendments)) that was being consulted on at the time.

More recently, we prepared briefing papers associated with the draft Order, the Health Care and Associated Professions (Miscellaneous Amendments and Practitioner Psychologists) Order 2009 providing information on the passage of S60 legislation for the regulation of practitioner psychologists. Similarly, briefings were written and issued jointly for the closure of the Hearing Aid Council and the opening of the HPC Register to private sector hearing aid dispensers. On this latter issue we also provided briefings to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Deafness.

We will continue to undertake briefings in this way as circumstances dictate. In addition to these briefings our workplan accommodates an annual information mailing to parliamentarians.

- **ePolitix.com**

ePolitix.com is an online resource which is located on the government's secure intranet and is designed to 'provide policy-makers with the relevant information at the right time so they can make an informed decision on all issues'¹. According to statistics provided by Dods Monitoring, who produce and manage the site, 72% of politicians and their offices use ePolitix.com.

¹ ePolitix.com mission statement

We have a mini-site within the stakeholder section of ePolitix.com which links to the HPC's main site and carries information about the HPC, any consultations or campaigns we are running as well as news, interviews and information about new publications, for example.

- **Meetings and events**

Meetings with parliamentarians are arranged on a 'needs' basis and are usually organised as circumstances dictate - following issues raised in parliament or following up on an HPC briefing, for instance.

Over the last two years, separate to our formal contact with the Department of Health ministerial teams, we have met with a range of parliamentarians who are interested in our work. These have included, for example, Andrew Lansley MP (now Secretary of State for Health), Anne Milton MP (now Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health), Earl Howe (now Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health), Lord Alderdice, Baroness Murphy, Lord Darzi, Baroness Bottomley, Baroness Wilkins, Norman Lamb MP, Lord Patel, Baroness Ashton, Baroness Cumberledge, Lord Hunt, Baroness Pitkeathley, Baroness Barker and Lord Layard. Meetings have also been undertaken with Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing and Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Health and Social Services.

In addition to meetings, we have organised two parliamentary exhibitions and receptions to raise awareness amongst parliamentarians about HPC's role in enhancing public protection. The first, in March 2008, was held in the Scottish Parliament (at which Nicola Sturgeon spoke) and the second, in March 2009, in Westminster (at which Ben Bradshaw, then Minister of State for Health Services spoke). Both events were well attended by a broad range of parliamentarians and stakeholders.

- **Membership of Health Hotel**

The Health Hotel is a membership organisation which holds mini-conferences at the three main Westminster political party conferences. Membership is open to statutory bodies, charitable organisations and trade associations with a strong health policy interest and, amongst others, includes GMC, NMC, the Kings Fund, RNIB, Macmillan Cancer, Diabetes UK, National Voices and the Patients Association.

Membership of the Health Hotel is assessed on an annual basis. Participation at each of the three main Westminster party conferences provides us with the opportunity to engage with those interested in the development of health policy through participation in fringe events, health consultations, the Health Hotel topical debate and the annual parliamentary reception.

This is the second year we have participated. Last year's 'fringe' event focused on patient safety and quality as an election priority alongside NMC, GMC and CQC. This year we are partnering with the Medical Protection Society and the Royal College of Midwives on the topic of developing the culture of openness across health and social care services.

- **Political Party Conferences**

For the past two years we have attended and exhibited at the Scottish National Party, Democratic Unionist Party and the Welsh Labour Party Conferences.

This work has afforded the opportunity to hear issues affecting stakeholders in the devolved administrations as well as the opportunity to inform parliamentarians and assembly members of HPC's work.

The Stakeholder Communications Manager is currently evaluating our participation in these events and looking at opportunities to develop our involvement for example, attending as a delegate and participating in fringe events.

- **Health Committees**

In the past, the Chief Executive has given evidence at both the Westminster and Scottish Health Committees.

The Stakeholder Communications Manager is currently undertaking research to develop this side of our work and exploring the potential for participation and/or attendance at Health Committees in the devolved administrations and the European Parliament.

Resources

All the activities set out in this paper are accounted for within the communications department workplan. The main resource is the time of the Executive to attend events and meetings as well as the Chief Executive and Chair.

Bircham Dyson Bell, parliamentary agents, provides high level support and advice on our stakeholder activities. As well as ad hoc advice, we meet at least once a year to review activities and they provide us with a detailed analysis of the political landscape and the ways in which HPC can most effectively participate.

Conclusion

Informing parliamentarians and related stakeholders is part of our broader stakeholder work which is set out in our communications strategy and workplan. At all times, our work is targeted and proportionate to our role as a statutory regulator.

The activities set out in this paper have been developed over time and the Executive will continue to review and monitor the effectiveness of this area of our work.