

Communications Committee, Thursday 4 November 2010

Summary of research on renaming the HPC

Executive summary and recommendations

### **Introduction**

This paper is intended to provide the Communications Committee with information about the work undertaken by the Executive on the renaming of the Health Professions Council (HPC).

### **Decision**

The Committee is invited to discuss the attached document.

### **Background information**

In July 2010, the Coalition Government published the report 'Liberating the NHS: Report of the Arms-length Bodies Review' which stated that

*'the regulation of social workers would be transferred to the HPC ..... which will be renamed to reflect its new remit' (DH, 2010, p22).*

### **Resource implications**

All costs associated with this piece of work have been met through the project plan budget.

### **Financial implications**

As above.

### **Appendices**

Report on renaming the Health Professions Council

## **Report on renaming the Health Professions Council**

### **Introduction**

This paper provides a high level summary of the work undertaken by the Executive to find a new name for the Health Professions Council (HPC).

### **Background**

In July 2010, the Coalition Government published the report 'Liberating the NHS: Report of the Arms-length Bodies Review' which stated that

*'the regulation of social workers would be transferred to the HPC ..... which will be renamed to reflect its new remit'* (DH, 2010, p22).

### **Work undertaken to date**

#### **1 Council and stakeholder discussions**

The Council received a paper 'Renaming the HPC' at its meeting on 17 September 2010 which asked for guidance on possible names. The Council discussed the paper highlighting the fact that at the current time no one profession's name was included in the title and agreed that it was not in the Council's role to promote the name of one profession above the others. The Council also noted that, as a multi-professional regulator, there was an imperative to ensure fairness across all the professions and achieve some continuity of recognition with the existing name.

The Council's views were taken to the meeting of the Social Work Regulation Oversight Group on 8 October.

The issue of name change was also discussed at the stakeholder meeting of social work representatives at the Department for Education on 15 October.

#### **2 Creative Agency Work**

Two creative agencies, Infinite Design and 360, were commissioned to further support this work. Their brief was to draw on and develop the considerations made by Council and consider the challenges faced by any organisation in undertaking a change of name. Both agencies made recommendations on a continuum of minimum adjustment to complete name change, with accompanying advantages and disadvantages for these options.

### **3 Research**

#### **Research methodology**

The Executive then commissioned two research agencies, Ipsos MORI and GfK NOP, to market test name options and gauge understanding of key words with the public and professionals.

The agencies undertook qualitative and quantitative market testing as follows:

- UK-wide telephone omnibus poll with 1,000 members of the public aged 16 years+.
- Two focus groups with members of the public and HPC-registered professionals.
- Face to face computer assisted (CAPI) polling. This polling was UK wide and reached 1,500 members of the public aged 15 years+.

#### **Research findings**

##### **Quantitative findings**

The telephone poll found that 81% of the general public judged 'Health and Care Professions Council' as the name that would best reflect the role of a regulator of many different professions. 81% also said that they felt this name was memorable and easy to understand.

The 1,500 face to face (CAPI) polling tested the association between the term 'social care' professional with 'social worker' as well as testing 'care' professional with 'social worker'. The differences between these were small. 76% of those sampled associated 'care' professional with social worker compared with 81% who associated the term 'social care professional' with 'social worker'.

##### **Qualitative Findings**

Both focus groups viewed 'Health and Care Professions Council' as the most suitable name to cover the range of professions regulated by the HPC. This was unanimous when put to an indicative vote. Comments on the name by both members of the public and professionals groups included:

- 'more open and inclusive to other professions'
- 'makes the public think that health professions do care'
- 'broader, could cover social workers'
- 'fits the professions more'
- 'does what it says on the tin'

In the discussions on word meanings and associations, 'social worker' and 'care' were also strongly associated across both groups. Some participants in both groups felt 'council' was a slightly dated term which implied discussion/democracy and some felt that 'regulator' might inspire more confidence among the public if

they were to raise a concern. However, the registrant group expressed the view (unprompted) that minimal change and minimal spend would be preferable and both groups recognised (unprompted) that other regulators have 'council' in their name eg General Medical Council (GMC) and that consistency was important.

### **Position statement research findings**

Both agency reports emphasised the importance of a positioning statement or 'strap line' to a name change strategy in this context. The statement would make clear which professions were regulated by HPC as well as communicate a clear message about the role of the regulator. This was consistent with other regulatory bodies as well as with the current approach taken by HPC.

The focus group research tested the positioning statement proposed by the creative agencies 'Regulating health, wellbeing and social care professionals'. This received a mixed response, arising mainly from confusion over the word 'wellbeing'. The focus groups agreed that, aside from this, the statement did 'cover the function and purpose of the HPC' The polling results also lend support for the inclusion of 'regulator' in the statement. (53% understood that a regulator 'sets standards' and 44% believed a regulator 'has powers to stop bad practice').

### **Conclusions**

1. Opinion research of this kind cannot ever provide conclusive evidence as it is based on individual perceptions. However, the focus group findings clearly corroborate the quantitative outcomes, which are based on independent polling of UK wide representative samples. Taken together the results alongside the Council's discussions provide a sound basis for proposing that the HPC is renamed the **Health and Care Professions Council**.
2. The Executive has considered the research findings and is proposing a revised positioning statement of '**Regulating health, psychological and social work professionals**'. This could be prefixed with '**protecting the public**' and/or '**setting standards**'. The revised statement more accurately reflects the range of professionals and sends a clear accompanying message with the revised name.
3. The new name, Health and Care Professions Council, affords a strong degree of continuity with our current name and function which would reduce the time and cost of re-establishing name recognition with our stakeholder audiences, particularly the professions themselves, members of the public and service users.
4. Importantly, this choice of name will also minimise visual identity costs and avoid a costly 'rebranding' exercise which may be viewed as unnecessary by many of our stakeholders.
5. Furthermore, it builds on the Council's discussion that any chosen name should be 'future-proofed' and should not promote the name of one profession above the others.