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THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL
Chief Executive & Registrar: Marc Seale

The Health Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
LONDON SE11 4BU
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7840 9785
Fax: +44 (0)20 7820 9684
E-mail: sophie.butcher@hpc-org.uk

PROFESSIONAL LIAISON GROUP FOR HEALTH, DISABILITY
AND REGISTRATION

Minutes of the second meeting of the Professional Liaison Group for Health, Disability and Registration held at 11:00am on Thursday 24 February 2005 at The Evangelical Alliance, 186 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BT.

PRESENT:

Miss M Crawford Chairman
Mrs K Atkinson Representative of Allied Health Professions
Federation
Mrs S Chaudhry Lay Council Member HPC
Ms K Goddard Policy Officer; Skill: National Bureau for Students
with Disabilities
Ms P McClure Lecturer; University of Ulster
Mrs J White Acting Director; Quality & Standards; Health
Professions Wales
Ms A Wood Representative of Allied Health Professions
Federation
Dr S Yule Radiographer; Registrant Member HPC

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms J Bailey UK Registration Officer, HPC
 Miss S Butcher Secretary to the PLG
 Miss C Harkin Manager of UK Registration, HPC
 Ms R Phillip International/Grandparenting Registration Officer,
 HPC
 Ms Rachel Tripp Policy Manager, HPC

Item 1.05/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following;
 Dr R Jones, Ms D Keetch, Mr V McKay, Ms P Simkiss,
 Mrs S Blair.

Item 2.05/12 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 2.1 The Professional Liaison Group for Health, Disability
 and Registration approved the agenda.

Item 3.05/13 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The Chairman welcomed all members to their second
 meeting as the Professional Liaison Group for Health,
 Disability and Registration. The Chairman also
 welcomed two HPC staff members, Ms J Bailey and Ms
 R Phillip from the U.K and International Registration
 departments respectively. They were joining the group
 to observe, and to advise in its discussion with regard to
 the registration process.

ITEMS TO NOTE

Item 4.05/14 COUNCIL DECISION REGARDING PLG REMIT

- 4.1 The Chairman reported that the Council had agreed at its
 meeting on 7th December 2004 to the PLG's revised work
 plan. This was to advise to Council on two documents.
 The first concerned providing additional information
 around issues of disabilities, and applications to an
 approved course. The second document was to provide
 additional information to applicants to the Register and
 doctors on the health reference.

- 4.2 The Policy Manager reported that she had attended a meeting with the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to help identify common themes and literature that would be of assistance in the formulation of the two documents. The TTA had produced a publication 'Able to Teach' which was highlighted as a useful template for marking the way forward. Dianne Keetch of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), had provided training on the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This was given to the Executive Management Team of the HPC, and Chairmen of the Council and committees. Case studies had been used and action plans produced during the training. It was confirmed that training unfortunately could not be extended at this point for other members as the DRC had kindly funded the training, and the HPC did not have further budget for DDA training .

Item 5.05/15 MINUTES OF THE PLG – HEALTH, DISABILITY & REGISTRATION

- 5.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the first meeting of the PLG Health, Disability and Registration be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 6.05/16 MATTERS ARISING

6.1 Item 4.3 – Matters Arising – HPC, Health, Disability and Registration

The Group noted that Ms Borg, Education Officer (HPC) had attended a Visitor Training Day and that further guidance was being produced for Visitors based upon the information obtained from this.

6.2 Item 4.9 – Matters Arising – Review of Standards of Proficiency (SOPs)

- 6.2.1 The Group noted that its recommendations on the Standards of Proficiency were fed back and would be considered as part of the review of the Standards of Proficiency.

6.3 5.4 – Matters Arising – Registration Panels

6.3.1 The Group noted that online applications, and the provision of registration forms in alternative formats was an on-going issue.

6.4 5.5 – Matters Arising - Appeals

6.4.1 The Group noted that information regarding appeals was available on the HPC website and that the Policy Manager would provide such information if requested.

Item 7.05/17 REVISED WORKPLAN FOR PLG

7.1 The Professional Liaison Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Manager.

7.2 The Group noted that the Council had agreed to amend the remit and terms of reference for the Health, disability and registration Professional Liaison Group.

7.3 The Group noted that the aim of this meeting would be to discuss some of the issues raised by the documents that are proposed, and to end the meeting with a first draft of a structure for each.

7.4 The Policy Manager reported as a starting exercise, the Group should suggest some questions and concerns of the potential readership. The Policy Manager reported that the case studies that the group would devise could not provide a 'definitive answer' but would rather be a means of providing appropriate guidance. Referring people to other organisations that would be of assistance would also be an important function of the documents to be drafted. This could be done via the provision of a list of organisations including organisations like the Disability Rights Commission and SKILL. The documents would also need to contain a glossary which would explain terms like 'fitness to practise' and Disability Discrimination Act.

8.5 BRAINSTORMING / GROUP EXERCISES

Item 8.05/18 QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS THAT THE DOCUMENTS COULD ADDRESS

The group was asked to brainstorm and then discuss the questions and concerns that applicants, admissions staff, and doctors may have.

- 8.1 The Group discussed the target audience that the documents would potentially cater for. The following were identified; applicants, parents, admissions tutors, placement co-ordinators and schools careers advisors. Various methods were discussed by way of making these documents available for such stakeholders. The Group noted that other regulators may be interested in the finished documents and the importance of disseminating this information as quickly as possible. The Group agreed that the most cost-effective option was to provide documents on the HPC website.
- 8.2 The Group agreed that in the documents the following items should be addressed: the types of reasonable adjustments that could be made, including if extra time could be given to complete assignments. The documents should also address the current concern of whether a student, upon completion of their course, would be able to gain successful entry to the Register. The Group noted that at various Universities occupational health screening was carried out as part of the pre-course fitness to practise assessment. However, applicants were often not aware of the processes, or of the resources that were available to them. Additionally, although funding could be secured from assessment centres it was a lengthy process to approve and therefore frequently not activated in time for the start of the course.
- 8.3 It was confirmed that the majority of applicants gained entry to the Register via an approved course. Guidance and advice could for example be provided to admissions tutors and university disability officers via example case studies. The ownership of guidance needed to be clear and responsibilities

properly identified. University providers had the responsibility to work with disabled students to identify placements that would enable the student to show how they met the HPC's standards. The Group discussed the fact that as a condition of their registration, all registrants (not only those with disabilities) could only work within their scope of practice, and that this was one of the principles of professional self-regulation. Registration did not necessarily mean that someone was able to work in all practice environments, or in all areas of their profession; registration meant that the person met the HPC's standards. The group discussed the difference between the standards of proficiency and a registrant's own scope of practice, and agreed that this needed to be made clearer.

- 8.4 The Group noted that as per Article 5(2)(b) of the Health Professions Order 2001 ("the Order 2001") applicants had to submit a health reference from a Doctor who had access to their medical records from the last 3 years. This could be a GP that the applicant had been registered with for 3 years, or a GP with access to that person's medical records. Applicants were often not aware that they had to be registered with a GP, and some applicants (particularly international applicants) therefore needed to undergo a private medical at a cost to the applicant. Complaints were received about this by the U.K. and International Registration departments. The Group discussed the ways in which these difficulties could be addressed and noted that admissions tutors at universities could help to make applicants aware of the registration requirements before they undertook a course.
- 8.5 The Group noted that applicants were asked on the registration form whether they had a condition that would impair their fitness to practise. The Group discussed the ways in which health and disability should be differentiated from each other so to clarify that it was a registrant's health that the HPC were concerned with and not their disability, as long as the registrant could meet the Standards of Proficiency, and would work within their scope of practice.

- 8.6 The Group discussed the fact that GPs often included irrelevant information on the health reference. For example, detailed personal information and assessment of their patient's professional skills. The group noted that doctors may do this because they are not clear about the purpose of the health reference, or they are concerned that not including information on the reference may have consequences at a later date. The Group noted that the document they would draft should be clear about the types of information actually required.
- 8.7 The Group discussed whether an applicant under the Freedom of Information Act would have the right to know why they had not been accepted onto the Register if the occasion ever arose. The Policy Manager reported that she would look into this query further by liaising with the Director of Information Technology, Mr Roy Dunn and report back to the Group at its next meeting.

Action: RT

- 8.8 The Group noted that all HPC staff and Council members were required to sign the the HPC data protection policy, to ensure that confidential information about applicants and registrants was not disclosed.

Item 9.05/19 CASE STUDIES – DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

The group were asked to discuss fictionalised case studies in small groups and make notes on the questions raised by the case studies.

CASE STUDIES

1. An applicant to a paramedic course.
2. An applicant who has an accident before applying for registration.
3. Queries from a Doctor about completing a health reference.
4. A student who develops epilepsy.
5. A potential applicant to a chiropody course.

9.1 The Group discussed the above case studies in the following contexts:

1. What other information might be useful?
2. What does the applicant need to know?
3. What does the university need to know?

Item 10.05/20 'REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS' – EXAMPLES

10.1 The Group discussed examples of reasonable adjustments that they had experience of, that course providers could make, in order to accommodate students with disabilities.

10.2 The Group discussed the problems that dyslexic candidates experienced and that the use of an electronic spells checks would be of great assistance to them and was an example of a reasonable adjustment.

10.3 Highlighting the funding bodies that were available to students was also recommended by the Group as a helpful way forward

10.4 The practicalities of placements for visually impaired students were discussed. An example was given when a blind student was not allowed accommodation at their University placement because the organisation felt that their guide dog posed a fire risk. Locations of placements for such students and travel links were identified as crucial points for consideration.

10.5

Items for discussion

Item 11.05/21 CONSIDERATION AND DISCUSSION OF DRAFT CONTENTS PAGE FOR DOCUMENTS

Applying for an HPC approved course/Health Reference

11.1 The Group discussed the draft contents pages that concerned applying for an HPC approved course and the health reference. The Group discussed the fact that an employer did have the

obligation to make reasonable adjustments but that it was not the HPC's role or within its remit to enforce this. The group agreed that it could provide information that lay outside the HPC's remit in these documents, as long as the HPC's role and remit was made clear, and readers were given information about other organisations that could help them. The Group noted that the terminology to be used in these documents should be subject to scrutiny by the Disability Rights Commission as the Group were mindful of the fact that not every impairment was in fact a disability.

- 11.2 The Group discussed the title of the documents, including the fact that phrases like 'an HPC approved course' may not mean anything to applicants. The group agreed the importance of positive, clear language. The group discussed the title 'Becoming a health professional' for the document about applying to courses, and agreed that the document could have a subtitle which more specifically related to information for people with disabilities.

Item 12.05/22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 There was no other business.

Item 13.05/23 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 The next meeting of the PLG – Health Disability and Registration would be at 11:00am on Tuesday 26 April 2005.

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