

Appendix 1

# Restructuring of the Health Professions Council

The Government's position and priorities

6 December 2005

HPC 5 October 2005



# Government principles

- **Patient safety is the guiding reason for regulation, not professional interest.**
- The regulator should contain some members elected by the regulated professions to provide professional buy-in.
- As the HPC is a UK-wide body, there must be minimum representation from all four home countries guaranteed.

# Government principles

- The chosen election scheme should be as democratic as possible, once four country representation has been guaranteed.
- The election scheme should provide the most efficient model possible, achieving the best balance of continuity and introduction of new members.
- The election scheme should be as open and transparent as possible.

# Government principles

- There should be no automatic link between professions regulated and dedicated membership of HPC's Council.
- There is consequently no need for alternate registrant members of Council, nor for provision to elect an extra registrant member from the same profession as a registrant Council President.

# Options considered by Ministers

- **Option 1 – Single Big Election**
- **Option 2 – Grouped Profession Elections**
- **Option 3 – Annual Conference**
- **Option 4 – Geographical Elections**

# Option 1: single election

- **Benefits**
- Efficient
- Removes professional representation emphasis entirely
- **Issues**
- Random professional membership – some professions may never put forward a successful candidate
- Voter apathy could set in with biennial elections of candidates from professions other than the voter's own.
- **Possible adjustment if needed to secure professional acceptance**
- Rotation of professions could be built in, so that over time all professions had periods with and without a member on Council.

# Option 2 – grouped elections

- **Benefits**
- Efficient
- Retains minimal link with professions as basis for electing members
- Registrants vote only once every four years so voter apathy is reduced
- **Issues**
- May be hard to agree on how to group professions: big ones might outvote small and factions might develop, however they are grouped.
- **Possible adjustment if needed to secure professional acceptance**
- Rotation of professions could be built in, so that over time all professions had periods with and without a member on Council.

# Option 3 – annual conference

- **Benefits**
- All professions would participate in electing the conference, which would give the illusion of inclusion in the Council election process
- **Issues**
- Registrants would not elect the Council members, so democracy would not be served
- Council membership election would not be transparent
- Elections would be held every year, which would be cumbersome and lead to voter apathy particularly as they would not be directly involved in the outcome
- Some professions might still end up not providing Council members
- Factions might develop within the conference and Council members, to the detriment of the Council's operation
- The conference might try to develop a more permanent role outside the HPC's vires.



# Option 4 – geographical elections

- **Benefits**
- Efficient
- Removes professional emphasis entirely
- **Issues**
- Could give small countries fewer Council members than at present: would build in a very large English majority
- Would concentrate attention on different country operational issues rather than on common standards for fitness to practise to give transferability across the UK
- Might give rise to factions on Council to the detriment of its work.

This option was rejected in 2001 at the time HPC was set up as being too removed from the primary aim of regulation (standards for fitness to practise) and on providing a built-in imbalance of national interests.

# Government position

- Must address all stakeholder concerns
- Must own proposals to convince stakeholders
- Must consult on proposals
- Government-sponsored legislation: must meet Parliamentary scrutineers' concerns

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