

Council, 19 May 2016

AHPRA / HCPC exchanges

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

In September 2014, the Australia Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the HCPC began a pilot exchange programme between the two organisations. Employees in both organisations have participated in exchange visits to each organisation. The overall objective of the exchanges was to assist in facilitating the sharing of information and expertise between the two organisations so that we can learn from each other.

The attached paper has been developed jointly with AHPRA. It reviews the outcomes of the exchange visits and discusses future plans.

Decision

This paper is for discussion. No specific decision is required.

Background information

None – see paper.

Resource implications

- None as a result of this paper.
- The resource implications of the exchange visits are factored in to department planning.

Financial implications

- None as a result of this paper.
- The financial implications of sending employees on the exchange include travel, accommodation and expenses. These are accounted for in departmental budgets.

Appendices

None

Date of paper

9 May 2016



Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander health practice
Chinese medicine
Chiropractic
Dental
Medical
Medical radiation practice
Nursing and Midwifery
Occupational therapy
Optometry
Osteopathy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology



AHPRA/HCPC exchanges

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2014, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) began a pilot exchange programme between the two organisations.
- 1.2 Helen Townley, National Director Policy and Accreditation, AHPRA, undertook an exchange visit to the HCPC in September to October 2014. Michael Guthrie, Director of Policy and Standards, HCPC, visited AHPRA in August to September 2015.
- 1.3 The overall objective of the exchanges was to assist in facilitating the sharing of information and expertise between the two organisations so that we can learn from each other.
- 1.4 This paper reviews the outcomes of the exchange visits and discusses future plans.

2. About AHPRA and the HCPC

- 2.1 The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is responsible for implementing the National Registration and Accreditation scheme (NRAS) in Australia. 14 professions are regulated under the scheme, including doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists and physiotherapists. Each profession has a national board which is responsible for the regulation of its profession. AHPRA works with the national boards to administer the scheme. There are approximately 635,000 registered health professionals.
- 2.2 The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) is responsible for regulating 16 health and care professions in the United Kingdom. These professions include biomedical scientists, physiotherapists and radiographers. Social workers are regulated on an England only basis. There are approximately 335,000 registered health and care professionals. The HCPC is one of nine UK-wide regulators of health and care professionals whose work is overseen by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA).
- 2.3 The HCPC regulates five professions also regulated under the NRAS: occupational therapists; physiotherapists; podiatrists; practitioner psychologists; and radiographers.

3. About the pilot exchanges

- 3.1 The exchanges comprised a project(s) for the home organisation and a project(s) for the host organisation. The exchangee was based at the host's offices and was able to attend a range of internal and external meetings.
- 3.2 The following section provides a short summary of each exchange visit and each organisation's assessment of the specific benefits of each exchange.

AHPRA exchange visit to HCPC

- 3.3 Helen Townley undertook a six week exchange visit to the HCPC between 8 September 2014 and 17 October 2014. Helen attended the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA) conference for the first week of the exchange, including the pre-conference session hosted by the HCPC.
- 3.4 Helen undertook a 'rapid review' of the HCPC's return to practice process. The project involved a desk based review, and a brief report considering the existing guidance for returning to practice and application forms; the requirements of other professional regulators – in health and care in the UK and internationally; and information/ guidance published by the professional bodies representing HCPC regulated professions. It also involved discussion with some key stakeholders identified by the HCPC.
- 3.5 The HCPC reports that it has benefited from the 'rapid review' of its returners to practice process, which has provided a helpful independent perspective on existing arrangements. The review has assisted the HCPC in identifying the key issues and in prioritising future development work. A consultation on revised guidance in light of the report's findings is planned later in 2016.
- 3.6 AHPRA's project aimed to develop a detailed understanding of multi-profession regulatory approaches used by the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) and lessons for the National Scheme, including through case study examples. The exchange focussed on success factors for multi-profession regulators and the stages in the HCPC's journey towards a truly multi-professional approach. Specific issues explored included:
 - HCPC policy development processes and governance
 - HCPC use and support of its partners and identifying the points which require profession-specific input, including in education and training and assessment of overseas qualified practitioners
 - How to determine the balance between multi-profession and profession-specific regulatory policy
 - The relationship between HCPC standards and guidance and guidance developed by professional associations.

- 3.7 The aim was to identify ways to accelerate the NRAS progress towards full maturity. Learning from the exchange has directly benefited AHPRA's approach to policy development in a number of ways, particularly through applying the concept of starting with a multi-profession approach and then testing it against profession-specific issues. This has increasingly become embedded as a key approach to policy development within the National Scheme. In addition, the exchange reinforced the importance of using evidence and research to build a compelling case for a multi-profession approach. The HCPC's insight into what quality assurance approaches are most useful, particularly in policy work, were very helpful and are continuing to inform current work. The exchange was also influential in subsequent governance work that AHPRA has undertaken to clarify roles and accountabilities within the National Scheme. The timing of the exchange was particularly helpful as it facilitated input into the joint National Boards/AHPRA submission to the review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme on a number of key issues.
- 3.8 The outcomes of the exchange were presented to the Forum of Chairs of National Boards, AHPRA's National Executive and a number of staff meetings, including a webinar available to all staff.

HCPC exchange visit to AHPRA

- 3.9 Michael Guthrie undertook a six week exchange visit to AHPRA between 17 August 2015 and 25 September 2015.
- 3.10 Michael undertook two projects for AHPRA. The first was a paper on the HCPC's partners model as a means of ensuring professional involvement in the regulatory functions. Michael also presented on the HCPC's model at a number of meetings.
- 3.11 The second was a paper about UK regulators' approaches to continuing fitness to practise, incorporating conclusions about whether a common approach to this area across a number of professions was feasible and desirable.
- 3.12 The paper and various presentations and informal discussions on the HCPC's partners model helpfully informed discussion by National Boards and AHPRA about different ways of ensuring appropriate professional input to regulatory decision-making. Presentations to AHPRA's Agency Management Committee, the Forum of Chairs of National Boards and several National Boards were particularly valuable in providing an opportunity to explore aspects of the HCPC partners model in more detail.
- 3.13 To date, work within the National Scheme on continuing fitness to practise has been focused on the medical profession. The paper about UK regulators' approaches to continuing fitness to practise is a key resource for future multi-profession work on revalidation and continuing fitness to practise across other professions in the National Scheme.

- 3.14 The HCPC's project was about understanding more about AHPRA's approach to using research and intelligence to inform development of regulatory policy. A particular focus was the work of the risk-based regulation unit.
- 3.15 The outcomes of the exchange were reported to the HCPC's Executive Management Team (EMT) and presented at an HCPC Council workshop. The HCPC has reported a number of benefits from the exchange. They include being able to attend meetings, read internal policy documents, and research and discuss current issues with AHPRA employees and the opportunity for reflection this provides. This has assisted in identifying some small scale operational actions for developing HCPC's policy function.
- 3.16 The time spent with the risk-based regulation unit has been enormously useful and has assisted in cementing HCPC's existing thinking about the role that robust analysis of data might play in furthering the 'prevention agenda' in professional regulation. The HCPC is commissioning research to understand the prevalence of fitness to practise concerns about two of its professions. The idea is that the research will help identify actions for how all those involved in practice, education, employment, representation and regulation in these professions can work together to identify preventative actions. The intention is to use the outcomes of this research, and the learning from the exchange visit, to consider how analysis of this type might in future become a more routine part of the HCPC's work.

4. Benefits of the exchanges

- 4.1 There are a number of 'generic' benefits from the pilot exchanges, described below.
- Enabling comparison between the two organisations (and 'benchmarking') to identify similarities, differences and potential improvements.
 - The ability to learn from other regulator approaches, albeit in a different context.
 - The ability to have access to meetings, documents and employees that otherwise is not possible in a 'desk top review' or via a limited number of meetings. An exchange is an opportunity to understand another organisation 'from the inside'.
 - The host organisation benefits from the exchangee undertaking a project(s) where they can bring their experience and an independent perspective to bear.
 - The exchange programme is a clear signal of the organisations' commitment to continuous improvement through learning from others.
 - Although not the primary objective, the exchange is a professional development opportunity for the exchangee (and potentially for other employees if backfill arrangements are put into place).

5. Future plans

- 5.1 The pilot exchanges were considered to be successful for the reasons outlined in this paper. AHPRA and HCPC have discussed their future plans in this areas, which are outlined below.

AHPRA

- 5.2 AHPRA is keen to continue exchanges with the HCPC particularly in relation to multi-profession regulatory issues. As with the pilot exchange, the exchange would also consider opportunities to meet with other relevant regulators. The HCPC was pivotal in facilitating this engagement during the earlier exchange and AHPRA would be grateful for similar assistance for future exchanges.
- 5.3 In 2016-17, AHPRA plans a model of a number of senior AHPRA staff and National Board members visiting HCPC for short periods on particular topics in conjunction with other travel to the UK, rather than a longer exchange at this stage. For example, AHPRA is interested in meeting with relevant HCPC staff on the HCPC's approach to quality assurance of education and training. This model will build on a number of previous similar brief visits and extend the benefits of engagement across a larger group of staff and board members.

HCPC

- 5.4 The HCPC plans to continue the exchange programme in 2016-17.
- 5.5 It plans to identify up to three operational areas where there are issues or challenges it wishes to explore in more depth.
- 5.6 Up to three employees at middle to senior manager level will be selected to spend time with AHPRA for three to four weeks. Clear objectives will be identified for each visit, with each employee producing a written report and presentation about the learning from their exchange on their return. AHPRA is happy to support this approach.