Finance and Resource Committee, 18 June 2013

Yearly review of customer service feedback

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

Since 2004, the HCPC has logged all customer service feedback. This includes complaints and positive feedback. This feedback is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Executive Management Team to identify learning points and process improvements.

The attached paper is a summary of the feedback received between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013. The paper outlines the feedback trends over the last year. Logging and reviewing feedback is an ISO9001 requirement.

Decision

The Committee is requested to note the document. No decision is required.

Background information

The HCPC's customer service policy is available at:
www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/aimsandvision/customerservice/

Resource implications

None

**Financial implications**

None

Appendices

None

Date of paper

6 June 2013

1.0 Background information

1.1 HCPC has been operating a customer service feedback system since 2004. Previously this role was carried by the PA to the Director of Operations. In November 2012, the Executive decided to create the "Service and Complaints Manager" post within the Secretariat to manage customer service feedback and develop the function within HCPC. This role includes the distribution of feedback to Managers and Directors for a response, updating the feedback database and reporting monthly to the Executive Management Team on feedback received. The Service and Complaints Manager works with managers to ensure the quality and consistency of complaint responses, identify corrective actions and ensure that these are implemented.

1.2 Feedback received by HCPC includes complaints and positive feedback. Requests for information and comments about processes and procedures are also logged and reported on.

1.3 During this 12 month reporting cycle (1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013), 601 complaints were received and 71 pieces of positive feedback were received.

1.4 Since we started logging complaints, we have seen generally seen an increase in the number of complaints logged year on year. This increase is attributed to several factors, including an increase in the size of the Register and communication with employees to identify complaints and ensure that they are logged centrally.

1.5 The graph on the following page shows the monthly distribution of complaints logged from January 2006 to March 2013. We usually receive a considerable amount of feedback when a profession renews its registration. The graph maps the complaints received over a two year period to reflect each profession's renewal cycle and to allow comparisons to be made.

1.6 To illustrate the effect that the transfer of social workers in England has had on the number of complaints received in the review period 2012 - 2013, a separate turquoise colour trend line shows the complaints received but excludes those received from social workers.

Number of complaints received during the review period
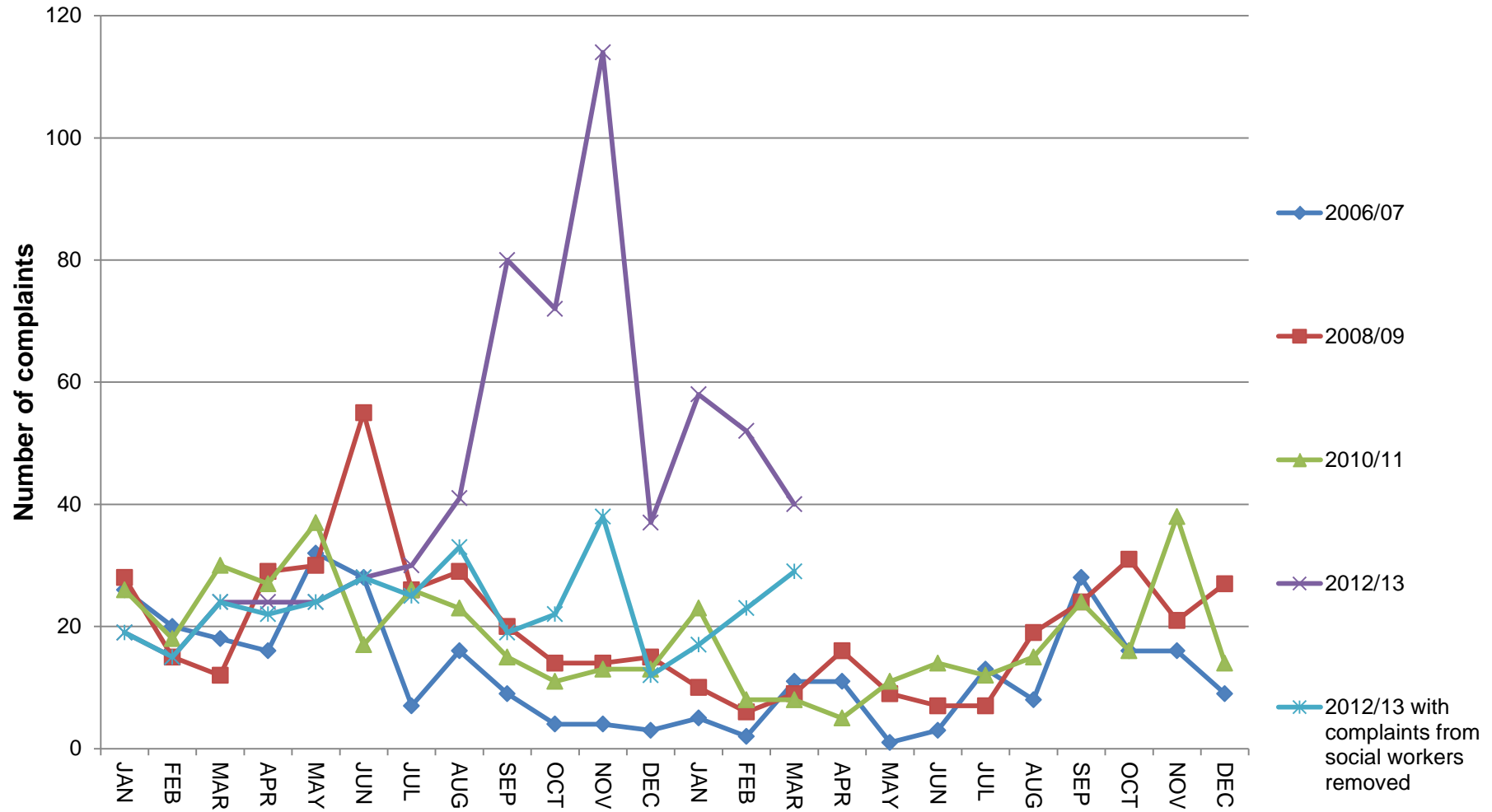
1.6   During the review period (1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013) there was a peak in the number of complaints received between September and November 2012, which corresponds with social workers joining the Register (1 August 2012) and their renewal window (1 September 2012 to 2 January 2013). There is a second peak in January 2013, which corresponds with the close of the renewal window and the removal from the Register of any social workers and operating department practitioners who had not renewed their registration. This is explained in further detail in Section 5.
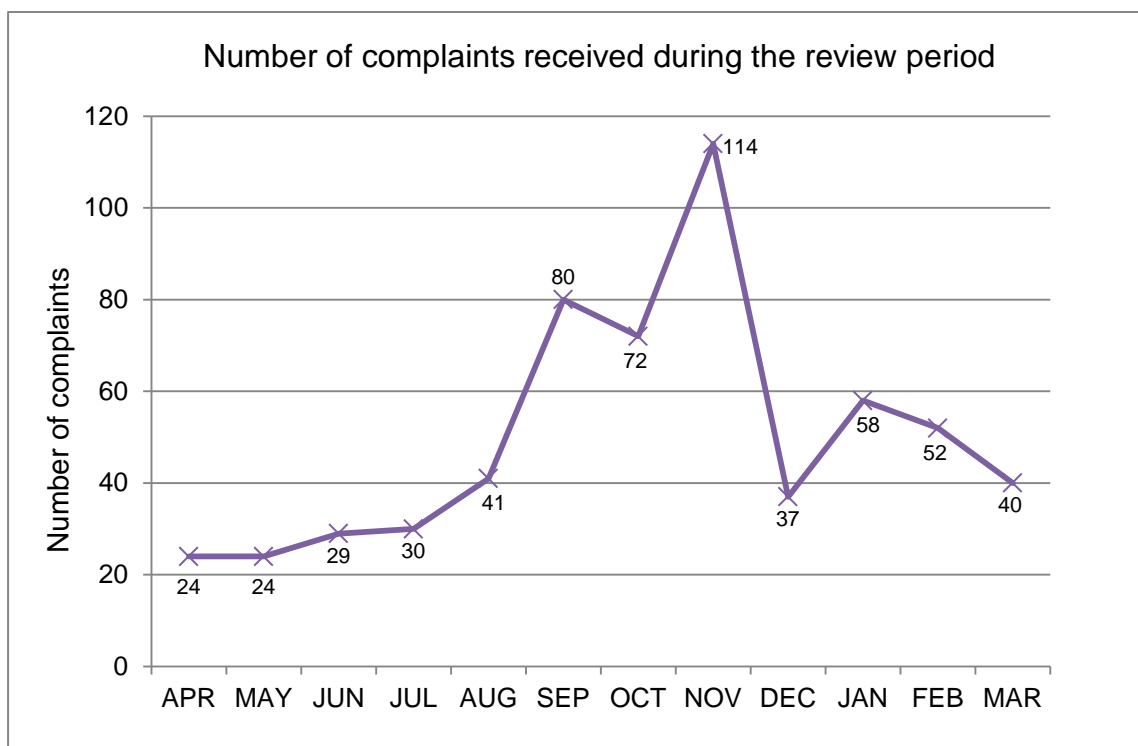
1.7   The table below shows the number of complaints received in the last 6 financial years.

Financial year	Number of complaints
2006/7	137
2007/8	160
2008/9	257
2009/10	235
2010/11	221
2011/12	207
2012/13	**601**

2.0   Customer service policy – response times

2.1   The HCPC aims to address complaints in a timely manner. From June 2012 the service standard for response was reduced from 18 working days to 15 working days. However, whilst our service standard is 15 working days, our aim is to respond to complaints within 5 working days, and the majority are responded to within this timeframe.

2.2   During the review period we received and responded to 601 complaints. We responded to 575 complaints within our service level of 15 working days, which represents 96% of complaints received.

2.3   There are occasions when a complaint may not be responded to within 15 working days, for example if the matter requires detailed investigations or legal advice.

3.0 Number of complaints received by department & profession

3.1 During the review period we logged 601 complaints, the majority of these complaints were responded to by the Registration department. The table below shows how many complaints each department responded to.
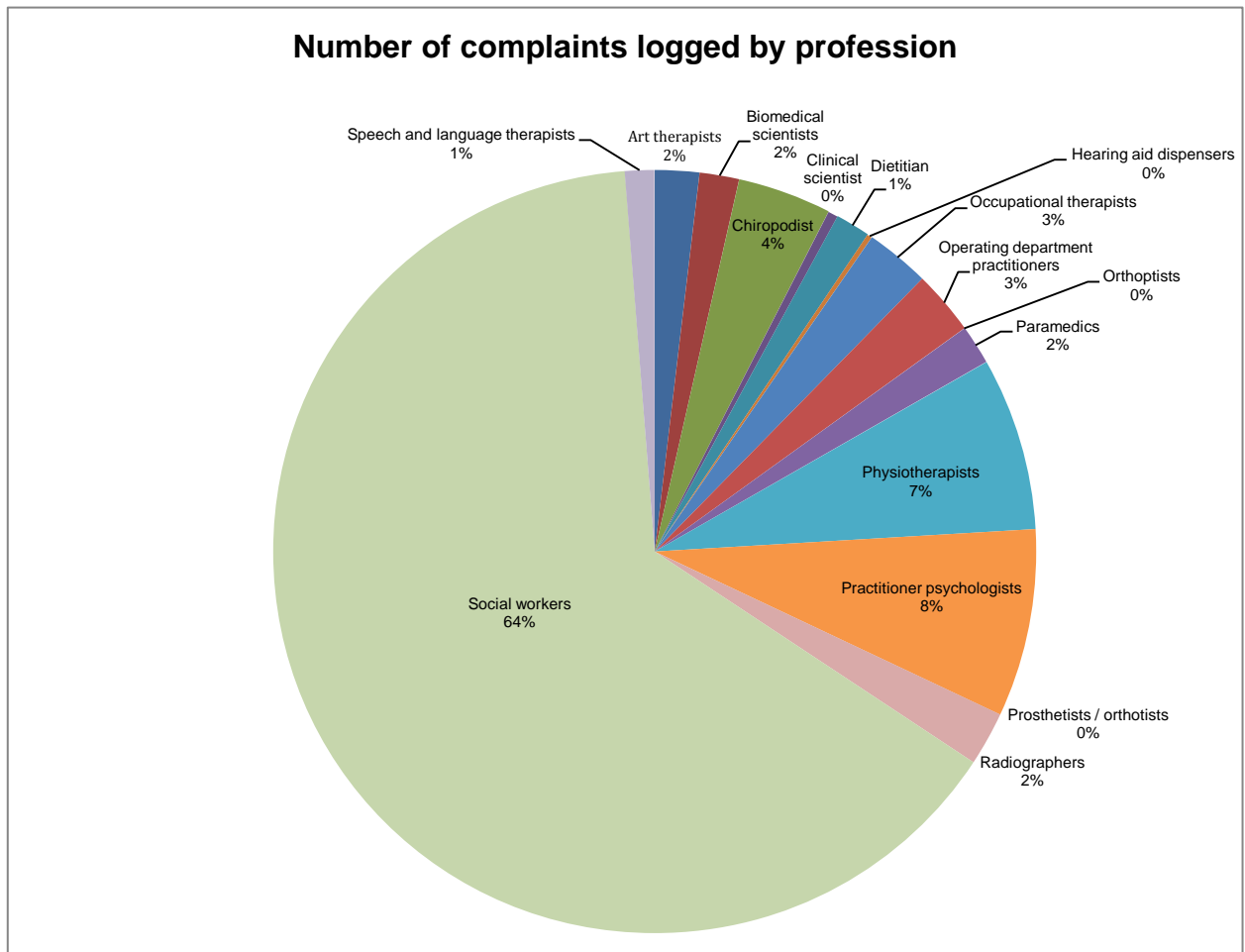
Department	Number of complaints
Registration	509
Fitness to Practise	38
Communications	24
Finance	11
Policy & Standards	11
Chief Executive	5
Education	2
Partners	1

3.2 During the review period, we received 478 complaints from registrants and applicants. The highest number of complaints received were from social workers. The table and graph below shows the breakdown of complaints received by registrants by profession.

Profession	Total	Number per 1000 registrants
Art therapists	9*	2.8
Biomedical scientists	8	0.4
Chiropodist / podiatrists	19*	1.5
Clinical scientists	2	0.4
Dietitians	7*	0.9
Hearing aid dispensers	1*	0.6
Occupational therapists	13	0.4
Operating department practitioners	13*	1.2
Orthoptists	0	0
Paramedics	8	0.4
Physiotherapists	35*	0.7
Practitioner psychologists	38*	2
Prosthetists / orthotists	0	0
Radiographers	11	0.4
Social workers	308*	3.7
Speech and language therapists	6	0.4

*Denotes that the profession was in renewal at some point during the review period.

3.3   The graph below shows the distribution of complaints logged by profession.

Number of complaints logged by profession

- Speech and language therapists 1%
- Art therapists 2%
- Biomedical scientists 2%
- Clinical scientist 0%
- Dietitian 1%
- Hearing aid dispensers 0%
- Occupational therapists 3%
- Chiropodist 4%
- Operating department practitioners 3%
- Orthoptists 0%
- Paramedics 2%
- Physiotherapists 7%
- Practitioner psychologists 8%
- Social workers 64%
- Prosthetists / orthotists 0%
- Radiographers 2%

4.0 Summary of complaints received

This table provides a summary of the main issues that were identified in complaints during each month, the departments that responded to complaints, the customer service policy and root cause.

Review month	Number of complaints received	Main Issues (summary)	Number of complaints per department	Customer service policy	Root Cause

April	24	• Renewal process - online renewal system
		• Lapsing (following renewal)
		• Fees - complaints were received about:
		  ○ the size of the fee
		  ○ being required to pay HCPC, having already paid the GSCC
		• FTP CMS emails
			Registration - 21
			Fitness to Practise - 2
			Policy & Standards - 1
				100%	HCPC 62.5%
					
					Registrant 12.5%
					
					N/A 25%

May	24	• Renewal process - online renewal system • Intermediate lapsing • International application process - communication	Registration - 22 Fitness to Practise - 2	100%	HCPC 21% Registrant 46% N/A 33%
June	29	• Lapsing (following renewal) • Intermediate lapsing	Registration - 24 Fitness to Practise - 3 Policy & Standards - 1 Communications - 1	97%	HCPC 28% Registrant 31%

					N/A 41%

July	30	• Lapsing (following renewal)
		• Fees - complaints were received about:
		  ○ the size of the fee
		  ○ being required to pay HCPC, having already paid the GSCC
			Registration - 14
			Communications - 8
			Fitness to Practise - 7
			Finance - 1
				70%	HCPC 39%
					Registrant 9%
					N/A 52%

August	41	• Lapsing (following renewal)
		• Intermediate lapsing
		• Fees - complaints were received about:
		  ○ the size of the fee
		  ○ being required to pay HCPC, having already paid the GSCC
			Registration - 29
			Communications - 7
			Chief Executive - 3
			Fitness to practise - 2
				98%	HCPC 11%
					Registrant 5%
					N/A 25%

September	80	• Fees - complaints were received about:
		  ○ the size of the fee
		  ○ being required to pay HCPC, having already paid the GSCC
			Registration - 71
			Communications - 4
			Fitness to Practise - 3
			Policy & Standards - 2
				99%	HCPC 15%
					Registrant 4%
					N/A 81%

October	72	• Fees - complaints were received about:
		  ○ the size of the fee
		  ○ being required to pay HCPC, having already paid the GSCC
		• Online renewal portal
			Registration - 66
			Fitness to Practise - 6
				92%	HCPC 28%
					Registrant 1%
					N/A 71%

November	114	• Fees - complaints were received about:	Registration - 106 Fitness to Practise - 4	97%	HCPC 20%

		- o the size of the fee - o being required to pay HCPC, having already paid the GSCC - Renewal process - Online renewal portal - generation of activation and authentication codes and logging in to the portal - Length of time to process renewal forms - Direct debit transfer	Finance - 2 Policy & Standards - 1 Communications - 1		Registrant 2% N/A 92%
December	37	- Fees - complaints were received about: - o the size of the fee - o being required to pay HCPC, having already paid the GSCC - Employer reminder letters - Voluntary removal letter	Registration - 29 Fitness to practise - 3 Communications - 2 Finance - 2 Policy & Standards - 1	100%	HCPC 24% Registrant 6% N/A 70%
January	58	- Lapsing (following renewal) - Employer reminder letters	Registration - 50 Policy & Standards - 3 Fitness to Practise - 2 Finance - 2 Communications - 1	97%	HCPC 26% Registrant 19% N/A 55%
February	52	- Lapsing (following renewal) - Employer reminder letters	Registration - 47 Fitness to Practise - 3 Finance - 1 Chief Executive - 1	100%	HCPC 36% Registrant 6% N/A 58%

| March | 40 | • Lapsing (following renewal)
• Online renewal portal - generation of activation and authentication codes
• Grandparenting process | Registration - 30
Finance - 3
Education - 2
Policy & Standards - 2
Fitness to Practise - 1
Chief Executive - 1
Partners - 1 | 92.5% | HCPC
22.5%
Registrant
5%
N/A
72.5% |

Total number of complaints: 601

5.0   Main areas of negative feedback

5.1   This section provides further details about the main areas of negative feedback received during the review period.

5.2   Registration fees
- The General Social Care Council (GSCC) did not stop charging social workers for registration until the final months of their operation. Many social workers complained that they paid both the GSCC and HCPC for registration covering the same period of time.
- The GSCC was heavily subsidised by the government, and charged a registration fee of £30 per year. Some social workers complained that the HCPC registration fee is significantly more.

5.3   Lapsing – the lapsing process is run if registrants fail to renew their registration. After the renewal window has closed, registrants are removed from the Register if they have not renewed. Complaints have been received about:
- The necessity to complete and return a readmission form
- The 10 working day service level for processing a readmission form
- Application forms being returned for additional information

5.4   Intermediate lapsing – the intermediate lapsing process is run if registrants do not maintain their registration payments. Registrants are written to twice to ask them to make a payment and they are removed from the Register if this payment is not made. Complaints have been received about:
- Not telephoning or emailing registrants about missed payments
- The necessity to complete and return a readmission form

5.5   Online renewal portal – registrants are encouraged to use the portal to keep their personal details up to date and to renew their registration. Complaints have been received about:
- Arrangements for the generation of security codes for accessing the online portal

5.6   International application process – the process consists of submission of an application form, submission of supporting documentation, payment, and qualification and verification checks. Complaints have been received about:
- Delays in processing applications
- Time taken to complete the verification process
- EEA mutual recognition

5.7 Employer reminder letters – the employer reminder letter is sent to registrant's employers two weeks before the end of the renewal window if a registrant has not renewed their registration; this allows the employer to remind the registrant about renewing. Complaints have been received about:

- Writing to employers
- The tone and content of letters

5.8 The online Register – registrants can be searched for by their individual registration numbers or by surname. Complaints have been received about:

- The difficulty of finding a specific registrant with a common surname in a profession with many registrants.

5.9 An explanation of corrective action is given in Section 7.

6.0   Root cause of complaints

6.1   To help HCPC identify where there may be problems with processes or policies, complaints are classified according to where the error that caused the complaint occurred.

6.2   Three groups are used to classify complaints, they are:

- HCPC – the HCPC has made a mistake that caused the complaint, or made a mistake whilst addressing the issues raised in the complaint. Examples of complaints in this category include giving incorrectly advised to a registrant or incorrectly returning an application form.

- Registrant or applicant – the registrant or applicant has made a mistake that has caused their complaint. Examples of complaints in this category include incorrectly completing a readmission form or returning a renewal form after the renewal deadline.

- Not applicable – neither the HCPC nor the Registrant are at fault in the issues brought to light by the complaint. Examples of complaints in this category include complaints about the size of the registration fee or regulation of new professions. From April 2013, this category will be further broken down to include information about whether a complaint is due to HCPC's Rules, policies or other factors.

6.3   During the review period, the breakdown of root cause of complaints was as follows:

- HCPC – 152 complaints
- Registrant/applicant – 54 complaints
- N/A – 388 complaints

Root cause of complaints logged during the review period

HCPC
26%

N/A
65%

Registrant
9%
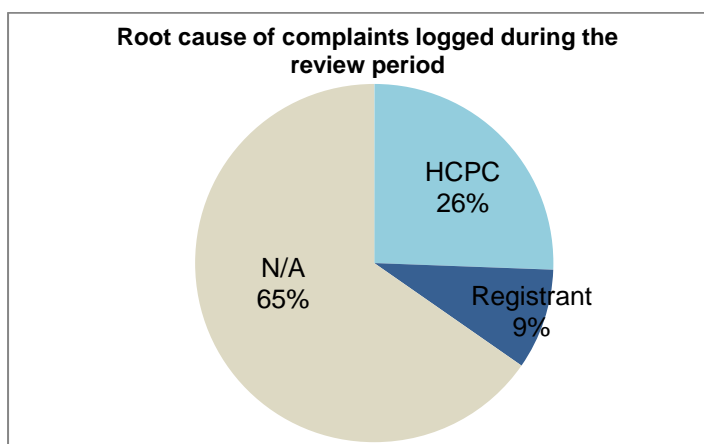
7.0   Corrective action

7.1   The majority of complaints (65%) that were received during the review period were not due to an HCPC error.

7.2   An essential part of complaint responses are an explanation of our processes and policies. For example, social workers who complained about paying HCPC registration fees were provided with a full explanation of the transfer, HCPC's financial position as an independent regulator and information about efficiency in the organisation.

7.3   As an organisation the HCPC starts by trying to correct any errors that have been identified in a complaint. For example, if an application form has been returned incorrectly, the form can be returned to a named individual and processed on receipt.

7.4   In complaints that the HCPC were at fault in, the majority of mistakes were due to human error. In these cases, additional training and mentoring is usually the most appropriate action.

7.5   During this review period, improvements in the Registration department have included:

- Improvement of the online training system for Registration advisors, this system ensures consistent training across the department.
- A "Trainer" post in the department, the Trainer coaches and supports new Registration Advisors, providing feedback and development points.
- Development of a two-sided readmission form to increase the efficiency and speed of the readmission process.
- Amendments and additions to the website, standard letters and emails when necessary changes have been identified.
- A review of the International application process "Record of Assessment forms" and guidance document for assessors to improve the quality and clarity of the information that is recorded in the assessment process.
- Updated assessor refresher training sessions.

7.6   A Registration system and process review will be initiated during this year.

8.0   Positive feedback

8.1   During the review period we logged 71 pieces of positive feedback. These included cards, letters and emails thanking employees for many contributions. Positive feedback was received for various departments throughout HCPC, for a huge range of activities.

8.2   Examples of positive feedback received included praise from registrant's thanking Registration advisors for help with the international application process and stakeholders thanking members of the Policy and Standards department for giving presentations at various events.

8.3   The table below shows how many pieces of positive feedback have been logged during the last 6 years in each reporting period.

Review period	Number of positive feedback
2006/07	26
2007/08	24
2008/09	33
2009/10	76
2010/11	78
2011/12	66
2012/13	**71**

9.0   Conclusion

9.1   There was a large increase in the number of complaints received during this reporting period. 601 complaints were logged, 394 more than in the previous year.

9.2   Of the increase in complaints, 78% were from social workers.

9.3   HCPC has on previous occasions observed an increase in the number of complaints received when new professions have been taken onto the Register. In anticipation of the transfer of social workers in England onto the Register, measures were taken to ensure continued communication with new registrants and good customer service; these included an evening shift in the Registration department to ensure that processes remained within service levels, and a rigorous communications plan. The focus of these activities was to mitigate, where possible, against a large increase in complaints.

9.4   Over the next year, with a dedicated resource, the feedback function at HCPC will be further developed including updates to policies and processes, changes to the website and further guidance for complainants.