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## Fitness to Practise Committee – 22 October 2009

### Fitness to Practise Department Service Standards

#### **Executive summary and recommendations**

This paper is intended to update the Fitness to Practise Committee on the service standards in place within the Fitness to Practise (FTP) Department. The department currently has external service standards and internal measuring tools.

CHRE highlighted the FTP department's external service standards in the HPC's 2008/09 performance review, as an area of "*excellence or good practice*" (Performance review report 2008/09, paragraph 19.2). CHRE further commented in paragraph 19.12, that the standards:

*"do not focus purely on how quickly cases are dealt with. Instead they focus on ensuring that everyone who comes into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department is given the same level of service. We welcome these changes as they increase accessibility to the complaints system and the transparency of the complaint process."*

#### **External service standards**

The external service standards were originally presented to the Fitness to Practise Committees at their forum meeting in September 2008. They have been published on the HPC website since Autumn 2008 and are otherwise publically available.

Service level standards are applied to the four functions for which the FTP Department is responsible (fitness to practise, registration appeals, protection of title and health and character). Five service level documents have been produced in total, one for general queries and one for each of the four functions for which the department is responsible. This was necessary due to the difference between the four areas of work. The areas covered in the standards are:

- Initial acknowledgement of cases
- Responding to phone messages
- Notifying the registrant of an allegation and panel decisions
- Updating complaints and registrants of the progress of the case

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2009-09-23	a	F2P	POL	Retention_ Cover Sheet	Final DD: None	Public RD: None

The emphasis of the service standards is around ensuring consistency across the team and that everyone who comes into contact with the department is afforded the same level of service. The service standards that are in place are designed to be achievable and realistic. Monitoring, where possible, has taken place internally to ensure that the department is meeting and is able to meet the standards. The importance of these standards is highlighted to members of the department in initial training and throughout their employment.

The performance of HPC's FTP Department is currently monitored in a variety of ways. Lead Case Managers hold monthly case meetings with their team members to discuss progress of all cases. Regular reports are produced to identify cases that have not had action taken in the past four weeks. Monthly reports are run to monitor and identify cases over five months old and also the time it has taken cases to reach certain points in the process. Cases being prepared by solicitors for final hearing are also reviewed on a two weekly basis and meetings held with Kingsley Napley every four to six weeks.

### **Internal measuring tools**

In order to monitor the progression of cases through the process against set timeframes, we have developed internal levels that we expect cases to meet.

At key stages of the investigation and adjudication, cases are expected to reach certain stages within pre determined time periods. These are not designed to apply rigidly as each case is unique, but are based on a percentage of cases reaching a point in a set timeframe.

For example, we expect the investigation in 70% of cases to be complete and sent to the Registrant for their observations within five months of receipt, 80% within seven months and so forth. 80% of cases should be heard by a final hearing panel within eight months of a case to answer decision.

Where cases fall outside set timeframes, they are highlighted and reviewed with the Case Managers or Kingsley Napley where appropriate.

Regular reviews are undertaken to ensure that the external standards and internal measuring tools set are still relevant and appropriate.

### **Decision**

This paper is for information only, no decision is required

### **Background information**

'Customer Contact' training was undertaken by the FTP department between July 2009 and September 2009. This included skills on ensuring communication with all FTP contacts is effective and timely. Each member of the team attended four half day sessions.

Furthermore, we also have service level standards with Kingsley Napley which include requirements for:

- the case plan to be sent to HPC within 2 ½ weeks of instruction

- witness details to be sent to HPC 2 weeks after interview
- cases to be notified as ready to fix 4 ½ months after receipt of papers
- bundles to be sent to HPC case managers 49 days before the date listed for hearing

### **Resource implications**

None

### **Financial implications**

Contact management training costs.

### **Appendices**

External service standards

FTP Internal Measures 2009-10

Health and Character Internal Measures 2009-10

Summary of Internal Measures and Service Standards

### **Date of paper**

08 October 2009

## **FITNESS TO PRACTISE DEPARTMENT SERVICE STANDARDS – FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMPLAINTS**

### **1. Contacting the Fitness to Practise Team**

- 1.1. The Fitness to Practise Team is generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814  
Free phone: 0800 328 4218  
Fax: 020 7582 4874  
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,  
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,  
SE11 4BU.

Contact names: Zoe Maguire (Case Team 1), Russell Brown (Case  
Team 2)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.4. Everyone will be dealt with in fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.5. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

### **2. Communication of information**

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. We will take reasonable steps to enable anyone to make a complaint or allegation, and to assist those with accessibility or literacy difficulties. We can take a statement of complaint over the telephone. Please see our "How to make a complaint" brochure for further information.

- 2.3. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities to ensure access to the complaints process where required.
- 2.4. Due to the nature of the work undertaken by the Fitness to Practise Department, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

### **3. Complainants**

- 3.1. Allegations are assessed on receipt and where there may be an immediate risk to the public or registrant concerned, contact will be made with the complainant between 1 and 3 working days from receipt of the allegation. This will be either in writing, by email or telephone.

In all other cases we aim to acknowledge receipt of the allegation in writing and inform you of the next steps in the investigations process within 10 working days of receipt.

- 3.2. Each allegation is assigned to a member of the team who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of that team member will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with any questions. If the Case Manager changes, we will notify you.
- 3.3. We will keep complainants informed of the progress of the case. This is achieved by ensuring that there is contact with the complainant by either by letter, email or telephone.

### **4. Witnesses**

- 4.1. Where it is necessary for us or our solicitors to obtain a witness statement from a complainant or other relevant person, this will be arranged at a convenient time and in a suitable environment.
- 4.2. If a witness is required to attend the final hearing, we will contact them with the details of this. They will be provided with a witness pack containing useful information and the direct contact details of a person in the team that they can contact with questions.
- 4.3. After a hearing, the complaint and all witnesses will be informed of the outcome.

### **5. Registrants**

- 5.1. Each allegation is assigned to a member of the team who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of that team member will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions. If the Case Manager changes, we will notify you.

- 5.2. We will keep registrants informed of the progress of the case. This is achieved by ensuring that there is regular contact with the registrant by either by letter, email or telephone.
- 5.3. The Registrant will be notified of the Investigating Committee Panel's within 5 working days of the decision.

## **FITNESS TO PRACTISE DEPARTMENT SERVICE STANDARDS - GENERAL ENQUIRIES**

### **1. Contacting the Fitness to Practise Team**

- 1.1. The Fitness to Practise Team is generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814

Free phone: 0800 328 4218

Fax: 020 7582 4874

Email: [ftp@hpc-uk.org](mailto:ftp@hpc-uk.org)

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

- 1.2. We aim to fully respond to general enquiries made in the form of letters and emails within 10 working days. However, if the query is complex, a full response may take longer.
- 1.3. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible a message facility will be available to the caller. We will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.4. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.5. Everyone will be dealt with in fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.6. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

### **2. Communication of information**

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. We will take reasonable steps to enable anyone to make a complaint or allegation, and to assist those with accessibility or literacy difficulties. We can take a statement of complaint over the telephone. Please see our "How to make a complaint" brochure for further information.

- 2.3. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities to ensure access to the complaints process where required.
- 2.4. Due to the nature of the work undertaken by the Fitness to Practise Department, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.



## HEALTH AND CHARACTER DECLARATION SERVICE STANDARDS

### 1. General standards for contacting the Fitness to Practise Team

- 1.1. The Fitness to Practise Team is generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814  
Free phone: 0800 328 4218  
Fax: 020 7582 4874  
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,  
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,  
SE11 4BU.

Contact name: Paul Robson (Case Team, 3)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.4. Everyone will be dealt with in fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.5. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

### 2. Communication of information

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities where required.
- 2.3. Due to the nature of the work undertaken by the Fitness to Practise Department, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

### **3. Case Management**

- 3.1. We aim to acknowledge a health and character declaration in writing within 5 working days of it reaching this department and provide information about the next steps in the process.
- 3.2. Each declaration is assigned to a member of the team who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of that team member will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions.
- 3.3. Declarations on application to the register  
We aim to process any health and character declaration that is made on application to the register as quickly as possible, in order to minimise any delay in registration. A panel can usually consider these cases within 1 month.
- 3.4. Self referrals by registrants  
We will keep the registrant informed of the progress of any further investigations we make.

## **REGISTRATION APPEALS SERVICE STANDARDS**

### **1. Contacting the Registration Appeals Team**

- 1.1. Registrations appeals are managed by a team of Case Officers within the Fitness to Practise Department. The Case Officers are generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814  
Free phone: 0800 328 4218  
Fax: 020 7582 4874  
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,  
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,  
SE11 4BU.

Contact name: Paul Robson (Case Team, 3)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.4. Everyone will be dealt with in a fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.5. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

### **2. Communication of information**

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities where required.

- 2.3. Due to the nature of Registration Appeals process, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

### **3. Case Management**

- 3.1. We aim to acknowledge an appeal in writing and tell the appellant what will happen next within 10 working days of receipt.
- 3.2. Each appeal is assigned to a Case Officer who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of the Case Officer will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions. You will be notified if the Case Officer changes.
- 3.3. We aim to hear each appeal within 6 months of receipt. However, in some cases it may take longer e.g. where there is a health or character issue that requires investigation.
- 3.4. We ask that appellants assist us by providing any information that is requested promptly and in the form required.

## PROTECTION OF TITLE SERVICE STANDARDS

### 1. Contacting the Protection of Title Team

- 1.1. Protection of title complaints are managed by a team of Case Officers within the Fitness to Practise Department. The team are generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814  
Free phone: 0800 328 4218  
Fax: 020 7582 4874  
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,  
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,  
SE11 4BU.

Contact name: Paul Robson (Case Team, 3)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.4. Everyone will be dealt with in a fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.5. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

### 2. Communication of information

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities where required.
- 2.3. Due to the nature of Protection of Title process, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set

out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

#### **4. Case Management**

- 4.1. We aim to acknowledge a protection of title enquiry in writing within 10 working days of receipt, and provide information of the next steps in the process.
- 4.2. Each case is assigned to a Case Officer who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of the Case Officer will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions. You will be notified if the Case Officer changes.
- 4.3. It may not be possible to keep a complainant fully informed of the progress of the case due to potential criminal proceedings.



## Health and Character Internal Measures 2009-10

		April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Average for year
<b>From receipt of declaration on application to the register to Panel</b>														
<b>Case heard or closed</b>	Total cases heard	11	18	29	52	67	68							41
	% within 1 month (target 95%)	82	78	93	98	94	96							90
<b>From receipt of self referral to Registration Panel</b>														
<b>Case heard</b>	Total cases heard	4	8	9	11	9	5							8
	% within 3 months (Target 70%)	50	29	56	55	33	60							47
	% within 6 months (Target 90%)	75	71	89	73	89	100							83
	% over 6 months	25	28	11	27	11	0							17



## Internal Measures

### Cases to panels

<b>Fitness to practise</b>			
From date allegation made to notifying registrant of full allegation	70% within 5 months	80% within 7 months	90% within 10 months
From ICP to final hearing	70% within 8 months		
<b>Registration Appeals</b>			
From receipt of notice of appeal to hearing	70% within 6 months	90% within 9 months	
<b>Health and Character</b>			
From receipt of declaration on application to the register to Registration Panel	95% within 1 month		
From receipt of self referral to Registration Panel	70% within 3 months	90% within 6 months	

## Summary of External Service Levels

	<b>FTP</b>	<b>POT</b>	<b>Appeals</b>	<b>H&amp;C</b>	<b>General enquiries</b>
<b>Responding to phone messages</b>	3 working days	3 working days	3 working days	3 working days	3 working days
<b>Initial acknowledgement of case</b>	General cases - 10 working days	10 working days	10 working days	5 working days	10 working days
	Interim order cases - 1-3 working days				
<b>Notify registrant of cases</b>	General cases - 10 working days	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Interim order cases - 1-3 working days				
<b>Notify registrant of panel decision</b>	5 working days	N/A	5 working days	5 working days	N/A
<b>Update complaint of case progress</b>	Monthly	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Update registrant of case progress</b>	Monthly				