

THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL

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MINUTES of a meeting of the Communications Committee held at **11:00am on Thursday 27th October 2005** at the Health Professions Council, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

Dr A van der Gaag (Chairman)
 Mr P Acres (part until Item 6.5)
 Mrs M Clark-Glass
 Mr P McFadden

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms S Butcher, Secretary to Committees
 Mr C Middleton, Director of Communications
 Ms N O'Sullivan, Secretary to Council (part from Item 7)
 Mr M Seale, Chief Executive (part from Item 7)

Item 1.05/01 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

- 1.1 The Secretary to the Committee welcomed all members to the meeting.

Item 2.08/02 ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

- 2.1 The Secretary to the Committee acted as Chairman for this first item on the agenda and requested that committee members provided nominations for the position of Chairman and Deputy-Chairman of the Communications Committee. Mrs Clark-Glass nominated Dr van der Gaag as Chairman of the Committee and Mr Acres seconded this nomination. Dr van der Gaag accepted the nomination and as there were no other nominations she was elected Chairman unopposed.
- 2.2 The Secretary to the Committee requested nominations for the position of Deputy-Chairman. Dr van der Gaag nominated Mr McFadden as Deputy-Chairman of the Committee and Mr Acres seconded this. Mr McFadden accepted the nomination and as there were no other nominations he was elected Deputy-Chairman unopposed.

Item 3.08/03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 3.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following committee members; Ms C Farrell, Mrs R Levenson and Mrs M MacKellar.

Item 4.05/04 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 4.1 The Communications Committee approved the agenda.

Item 5.05/05 MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 4TH MAY 2005

- 5.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the fourteenth meeting of the Communications Committee meeting be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 6.05/06 MATTERS ARISING6.1 Item 4 - Language Translations

- 6.1.1 The Committee discussed the merits of utilising the services of a company called 'Language Line' who could provide interpretation services in over 120 different languages to assist the general public in the translation of the publications that the Health Professions Council (HPC) produced. The Committee noted that the company could set up a standardised code with guaranteed access to an interpreter of their chosen language. No fees would be incurred just a standard call charge of £1.50 per minute was billed to the user. The Committee noted that the recruitment of such a service was not subject to tender as there were no fees involved and was therefore not necessary in this instance. To date the only languages that had been requested for translation were Irish, Gaelic and Welsh. The Committee agreed that the use of 'Language Line' was a positive step in the provision of good customer service but should be subject to review in one year's time.

6.2 Item 4 – HPC Posters

- 6.2.1 The Committee noted that the HPC posters had now been distributed to the Practice Managers of doctor's surgeries who requested them and that a good number were currently being displayed.

6.3 Item 4 – Listening Events Q & A's

- 6.3.1 The Committee noted that specific guidance in the form of Q and A's was currently being drafted for panel members information before listening events and consultations in the future as it had been identified as a useful pre-requisite.

Item 7.05/07 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- 7.1 The Committee received an update on the activities of the Communications department relating to both its current and future project plans.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that part of the communications strategy that promotes the targeting of 3-4 stakeholders per year was carried out in addition to HPC meeting and greeting with a wide variety of groups and organisations. This was done so to promote a greater knowledge of the work carried out by the HPC. The Committee noted that one of the most influential stakeholders was the Consumer's Association and agreed that it would therefore be advantageous to foster good working relationships with this group and to prioritise making such contact as soon as possible.

Action: CM

- 7.3 The Committee noted that an HPC microsite was currently under development that would be used in future publicity material so to encourage members of the public to use the on-line register to check if their health professional was registered. The Committee agreed that the link should be sent to all members for their review. The microsite was to be completed by 7th November and would be publicly available as of the 14th November 2005.

Action: CM

Item 8.05/08 DATES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2006/2007

- 8.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Secretary to the Committee.
- 8.2 The Committee approved the dates proposed for its forthcoming meetings in 2006/2007. Mr Acres sent his apologies for the next meeting to be held on Monday 27th February 2006.

Item 9.05/09 PUBLIC PATIENT INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 The Communications Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Director of Communications.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that one of the current communications plans was to develop a strategy that ensured effective patient and public involvement in the work of the Health Professions Council (HPC).

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DD: None

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Public
RD: None

- 9.3 The Committee noted that the field of public patient involvement (PPI) was relatively new to the HPC and the other eight healthcare regulators. The role of the regulators in relation to this agenda was not readily decipherable and the committee therefore agreed that any advancement in developing a greater understanding between the role of the regulator and that of employers would be advantageous. The HPC needed to decide whether it was to adopt its own strategy or undertake this work jointly in conjunction with the health regulators PPI Group hosted by the General Chiropractic Council.
- 9.6 The Committee discussed the approach proposed for the undertaking of the work of the PPI Group and questioned why the identification of what the public and patients wanted was given a medium prioritisation when this was the Groups main focus and perhaps should be readdressed in this context. The Committee also discussed the research methodology to be utilised and debated the appropriateness of using focus groups when successfully managing the expectations of the public.
- 9.7 The Committee discussed the membership criteria of the PPI Group which required a member of Council to participate. Discussion took place as to whether this should be a lay member or the Chairman of the Communications Committee but noted that the membership was by no means fixed and would rather benefit from an interchangeable quorum whereby the wide experience of the committee could be utilised in a mutually beneficial way. The committee agreed in the first instance that Dr van der Gaag would attend the PPI Groups next meeting scheduled for January 2006. As agreed future meetings maybe attended by other members of the communications committee who had expertise in this area.
- 9.8 The Director of Communications reported that he would prepare a brief strategy of what the committee wants to obtain from its work with the PPI Group and present it at the next communications committee meeting. The committee endorsed the mix and match approach so that it could achieve its long term aims of developing a policy whilst also being able to respond to short-term events. The committee noted that there was currently a lack of intelligence on how the healthcare regulators communicated on this matter.

Action: CM

- 9.10 After a full discussion the committee were in agreement that HPC should strive to deliver a PPI strategy that draws upon the work of the joint regulators PPI group by May 2006. The Director of Communications would prepare a budget for this work demonstrating the link to the overall Communications departmental budget and present it at the next meeting in February 2006.

Action: CM**Item 10.05/10 THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

- 10.1 The Communications Committee received a paper to note from the Secretary to the Committee.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that the Communications Committee was governed by a set of Standing Orders that established the basic rules about how the committee should undertake its proceedings.
- 10.3 The Chief Executive drew the committee's particular attention to sections 33, 34 and 35 which related to members' education, training and performance needs. The Committee noted that if they wished to receive training specific to their role on the Communications Committee to contact Chris Middleton with their requests.
- 10.4 The Committee noted that a number of Communications Committee meetings in the past had been found inquorate which resulted in a fragmented input from its members. The Committee noted that this was due to external factors out of HPC's control when two of its members were not able to attend meetings for personal reasons on a more or less permanent basis. The Committee were satisfied that since the elections and the allocation of new members to this committee that the likelihood of inquorate was now considerably reduced.

Item 11.05/11 SERVICE STANDARDS

- 11.1 The Communications Committee received a paper to note from the Director of Communications.
- 11.2 The Committee noted that at its last meeting a request had been made to review the HPC's service standards. Historically the portal for any complaints received was via the communications department. Standards were therefore put in place to ensure that customer service was carried out to the highest standards possible. A member of the communications team had worked in close liaison with GB Training for 6 months in the devision of these standards. After implementation GB Coaches were placed in each of the registration departments UK and International to assess the quality of service given. The longer term plan was to imbed these into the HPC staff's job descriptions and to train 2-3 coaches internally to carry out a wider assessment of the provision of customer services from the organisation as a whole. The Committee discussed how staff would be measured and if the standards as currently set were readily measurable and quantifiable.

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- 11.3 The Committee discussed the fact that the HPC had grown significantly over the last two years and the demands made upon it had in turn increased especially with regard to the volume of renewals received. The Committee discussed what mechanisms were in place to help deal with busier periods, and noted that more staff had been allocated to the telephones on Mondays as this had been identified as their busiest day. The Committee noted that in the long term a fundamental review was required of the renewals process. A potential change in legislation was discussed as this is what currently drives the peaks and troughs experienced in workload.
- 11.4 The Committee discussed the service standard which advocated greeting everyone with a handshake and looking them firmly in the eye. The Committee noted that this was not necessarily the most appropriate form of greeting to be adopted as it did not necessarily adhere to all cultural norms where it might be perceived by some religious faiths as rude and unacceptable behaviour. The Committee agreed that this service standard therefore needed to be revised.

Action: CM

- 11.5 The Committee noted that further elaboration was needed in the service standard on offering further assistance. There needed to be to a prompt at the conclusion of the call about whether there was any further information callers would like or how HPC staff could help further.

Action: CM

- 11.6 The Committee noted that staff members throughout the organisation had been very much involved in the developmental process of creating the service standards as applicable to each department. The Committee noted however that the standards as currently produced were not easily quantifiable and could not be measured in relation to staff performance targets. The Committee therefore recommended for a review of the service standards if they were to be integrated into the performance reviews of staff.

Action: CM

Item 12.05/12 COMMUNICATIONS WORK PLAN

- 12.1 The Communications Committee received a paper to note from the Director of Communications.
- 12.2 The Committee noted that the work plan illustrated the major projects

currently underway and planned for implementation from October 2005 – March 2006.

- 12.3 The Committee discussed the stakeholder newsletter in particular and noted that a great deal of information had now been collated for its inclusion. The Committee noted that the newsletter was to be produced in electronic format and would be directly accessible via the HPC website. This would assist in maintaining an up to date information source that would not become obsolete in the short-term.
- 12.4 The Committee commended the stakeholder engagement plan with public/patient groups. The Committee noted that it was important to be able to distinguish between the role of the regulator and that of the employee and was envisaged that the work of this group would advance such relationships in a very positive manner. The committee noted that it was a BUPA joint sponsored event with the other 8 healthcare regulators.
- 12.5 The Committee noted that Listening Events would be held in Inverness on the 8th November 2005 and were to be broadcast to Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides. The Committee noted that this had been undertaken in Inverness last year as well. Very positive feedback had been received from registrants who commended the HPC at having put on an event so far away from London. The radio broadcasts were noted to be very useful for communicating this information too.

Item 13.05/13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 13.1 There was no other business.

Item 14.05/14 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Communications Committee would be at 11:00am on Monday 27th February 2006.

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