

Communications Committee 23 February 2012

Transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This paper provides an update to the Communications Committee on communications activities in relation to the transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council (GSCC). It covers communications work undertaken since the last Communications Committee in November 2011.

Decision

The Committee is invited to discuss the attached documents.

Background information

See introduction to paper.

Resource implications

All communications activities associated with this project will be accommodated through the project plan budget.

Financial implications

See above.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Selection of social work media coverage
- Appendix 2: Examples of social work parliamentary activity
- Appendix 3: Frequently asked questions on the transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council

Transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council

Introduction

1. This paper provides an update to the Communications Committee on communications activities undertaken since the last meeting in November 2011.

Background information

2. We will open the Register to social workers in England on 1 August 2012, subject to the passage of legislation.

Communications activities to date

3. Set out below are some of the activities which we have undertaken since the last Communications Committee on 8 November 2011.
4. Communications activities are set out in the joint communications workplan for the transfer of social workers in England written in collaboration with the GSCC. The workplan has been updated with the GSCC following a meeting in December. In January the Communications team held a meeting review the plan and discuss upcoming activities to the date of transfer and beyond.

Liaison with the GSCC

5. The Communications team have regular contact with their equivalents at the General Social Care Council. We liaise with the GSCC on media queries, share media releases and updates to position statements. We have recently met with the GSCC to update the communications plan for the transfer (23 November); to discuss information mailings to registrants and HPC event mailings (19 January); and to discuss the newsletter and any arising data protection issues (26 January).

Media

6. Social work media activity is monitored on a daily basis.¹ Themes in the media from November 2011 to January 2012 have been student registration, registration fees, voluntary registration, standards of proficiency, student registration fees, consultations on student fitness to practise and registration, and registration cycle for social workers.
7. Activities since November 2011 have included:

¹ See Appendix 1 – Selection of social work media coverage

- regular contact with reporters from Community Care and other relevant media;
- press release issued and social media channels updated to support consultations on student fitness to practise and registration, and registration cycle for social workers in England;
- information included in the GSCC's social work connections e-bulletin and HPC's social media channels announcing partner recruitment.

Parliamentarians

8. On Wednesday 21 December the line by line examination of the Health and Social Care Bill committee stage concluded in the House of Lords. No amendments were made in relation to the HPC and the transfer of social work regulation.
9. The Bill will now enter into Report stage in the Lords, the first day of which will be Wednesday 8 February. This stage allows Members of the Lords further opportunity to consider all amendments made during Committee stage.
10. Following the Report stage, the Bill will be reprinted to include all the agreed amendments. The Bill will then move to a third reading for the final chance for the Lords to debate and change the Bill. It will then return to the Commons for debate on the amendments before receiving Royal Assent.
11. Activities relating to parliamentarians have included:
 - attended Committee stage dates for debates on our section of the Bill;
 - liaison with the Department of Health on written questions in the Lords;²
 - published information on ePolitix;
 - liaison with Ministers on further briefing on transfer workplan; and
 - dialogue with Dods on linking social care monitoring to existing parliamentary monitoring.

Stakeholders

12. We have identified relevant communication contacts in a range of stakeholder organisations and have begun a programme of meetings. Since November 2011 we have met with:
 - NSPCC (18 November)
 - Unison (23 November)
 - National Social Care Councils Network (8 December)
 - NSPCC webinar (15 December)
 - BASW - British Association of Social Workers (16 December)
 - Help the Hospices (on-going dialogue relating to work on Health Hotel)
13. The Chief Executive, Chair and members of the Policy Department have also attended social work stakeholder meetings and represent the HPC on the

² See Appendix 2 – Examples of social work parliamentary activity

Social Work Reform Board, Social Work Regulatory Oversight Group and ADASS Workforce Network.

Events

14. Activities since the last Communications Committee have included:

- a joint HPC / GSCC workshop and stand at Community Care Live Children and Families Conference (16 November)
- a joint HPC / GSCC workshop at the Manchester Compass jobs fair (14 November)

15. The stand at Community Care was visited by approximately 300 individuals from across public and private sectors, including directors of children's and adult services, policy makers, service managers, social workers and students.

16. Our Stakeholder Communications Manager delivered workshops at the two events above with Sherry Malik, Deputy Chief Executive of the GSCC. The most common topics for discussion were the increased registration fee, the renewal process, CPD, the standards and student registration.

Web

17. We have updated the frequently asked questions (FAQs) for social workers on the website, including information on the registration fee.³

18. A spotlight on the homepage is dedicated to social workers to provide quick access to the pages for all audiences.

Publishing

19. Since November 2011 we have published the following articles in HPC In Focus:

- Issue 38 (December) included articles announcing the launch of the consultation on student fitness to practise and registration, and information on partner recruitment.
- Issue 39 (February) included an article announcing the launch of the consultation on the registration cycle for social workers in England, and an advertisement for visitors (social workers) and panel chairs (registrant and lay including social workers).

HPC employees

20. Since November 2011 we have:

- published articles in HPC Update on the Health and Social Care Bill (November), an update on the transfer of social workers (January), and joint event work with the GSCC (December);

³ Appendix 3 – FAQs on social workers

- briefed employees on the progress of the legislation in the November all employee meeting;
- published information in Issues Brief and the media coverage report / media centre;
- briefed the employee consultation group (December); and
- published news items on the intranet on the two consultations and the next stages of the Health and Social Care Bill.

Next steps

21. Over the coming months our focus will be on:

- preparation for social work specific events targeted at employers, those working in education and individual social workers;
- preparation for social work specific exhibitions and conferences: Compass jobs fair in Birmingham (March) and Community Care Live (May);
- preparation for the public information campaign;
- student registration;
- the passage of legislation;
- communications around Partner recruitment;
- work with the Registrations Department to develop and deliver briefings to the team on social workers and publish information on the website;
- meetings with communications contacts within relevant stakeholder organisations; and
- updates to the dedicated social worker webpages.

Appendix 1 - Selection of social work media coverage

October 2011

- 3 October 2011 www.guardian.co.uk
What every social work student should know
Almost six and a half thousand students are embarking on professional social work course in England as undergraduates. Few professionals can expect to receive as much hostility, negative stereotyping and media attacks.
- 17 October 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
Reform board agrees new framework for social work development
The Social Work Reform Board has agreed a new framework for the continuing professional development of social workers in England
- 20 October 2011 Community Care
Supply and demand model for English local council social workers unveiled
A supply and demand model for estimating how many social workers are needed in England is being rolled out this week.
- 24 October 2011 Community Care
Benefits for social workers of College/UNISON memberships
The College of Social Work's alliance with UNISON has been the subject of some contention over the past year. Social workers who sign up to the College when it becomes operational in January will automatically become members of the union.

November 2011

- 1 November 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
Social work students set for higher registration fees
Social work students in England are likely to face higher registration fees if the Health Professions Council maintains the voluntary register after it absorbs the General Social Care Council.
- 4 November 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
Social workers confused over College and GSCC roles
Half of social workers and social work student do not know the difference between a regulator and a professional body according to a General Social Care Council poll of 360 people.
- 7 November 2011 www.basw.co.uk
New regulatory standards place unreasonable expectations on social workers

BASW has raised concerns that proposed proficiency standards for social workers would place unreasonable expectations on newly-qualified social workers.

- 7 November 2011 www.basw.co.uk
Concern at HPC plans for voluntary student register
The Health Professions Council (HPC) has launched a consultation on whether it should keep a voluntary register for social work students.
- 10 November 2011 Community Care
Confusion rife over College role
Social workers are confused about the difference between a professional body and a regulator, according to a poll by the General Social Care Council.
- 10 November 2011 Community Care
The Week: Higher fees for students
Social work students in England are likely to face higher registration fees if the Health Professions Council maintains the voluntary register after it absorbs the General Social Care Council.
- 16 November 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
Social workers express ire over regulation double whammy
Social workers expressed their indignation at Community Care Children & Families Live 2011 after the prospect of having to pay twice to keep their place on the social work register was raised.
- 21 November 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
GSCC launches boundaries guidance for social workers
The General Social Care Council has launched guidance on professional boundaries for social workers in England following concerns that some practitioners are abusing their position of power.
- 21 November 2011 www.guardian.co.uk
Social workers could pay twice to register next year
British Association of Social Workers launches 'no' campaign after social workers were told they could pay twice for registration next year and significantly higher fees afterwards.
- 23 November 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
Social worker fees will be 'appropriate and realistic'
Marc Seale, chief executive of the Health Professions Council (HPC), responds to our article, 'Social workers could pay twice to register next year'.
- 24 November 2011 Community Care
Social workers will be forced to pay twice for registration next year
Social workers expressed their indignation at Community Care Children & Families Live 2011 after the prospect of having to pay twice to keep their place on the social work register was raised.

December 2011

- 2 December 2011 The Guardian
Why we must do more to protect those receiving home care
Without workforce regulation, the potential for poor care to remain hidden is enormous
- 5 December 2011 BASW – The College of Social Work (online)
BASW surprise at solitary instance of restoration
BASW has expressed its surprise that just one of 167 social workers banned from practising by social care regulators across the UK has reapplied to join the social care register, restating its belief that "rehabilitation is a vital tool in the social work armoury".
- 6 December 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
The recession led to less churn in social work, says Gibb
Has the recession helped social work? The obvious answer might appear to be "no"; it prompted mass job losses, a public sector pay freeze and the current furore over pensions. But in other ways, it has had an unexpectedly positive impact on the profession, argues Moira Gibb, chair of the Social Work Reform Board.
- 8 December 2011 The Guardian
High tensions over establishment of social work college
A dispute between the CSW and the British Association of Social Workers continues – but at least they are still willing to talk. Terry Philpot unpicks the controversy.
- 8 December 2011 www.communitycare.co.uk
Registration consultation for social workers
The Health Professions Council has today launched a consultation on setting the registration cycle for social workers in England.
- 12 December 2011 Wired.gov
HPC launches consultation on registration renewal date for social workers
The Health Professions Council (HPC) launched a consultation inviting stakeholders for their views on the proposed registration renewal date for social workers in England.
- 15 December 2011 Cabinet Office
Quango reforms take a leap forward as Public Bodies Act receives Royal Assent
The government's plans to radically increase the transparency and accountability of public bodies took a leap forward when the Public Bodies Act received Royal Assent.
- 30 December 2011 BASW - Professional Social Work
The waves of change
Andrew Truby considers what the transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council will mean for your practice and the standards expected for the profession as a whole.

- 31 December 2011 BASW – Professional Social Work
Social workers urged to sign e-petition against having to pay twice to register
BASW is urging all social workers to sign an e-petition aimed at preventing social workers having to pay their registration fees twice next year as fears emerged that some practitioners in England will pay money to both the General Social Care Council and its successor body the Health Professions Council (HPC).

January 2012

- 12 January 2012 www.communitycare.co.uk
Should you join The College of Social Work?
Last week's launch of The College of Social Work has posed each of England's approximately 85,000 social workers with a simple question: to join or not to join? Check out our comparison table to help you decide.

The economic downturn is squeezing living standards, social worker registration fees are to double from £30 to about £60 for basic rate taxpayers this year, as the non-subsidised Health Professions Council succeeds the government-funded General Social Care Council. And The College is an unknown quantity.

February 2012

- 2 February 2012 Rugby Advertiser
170 jobs to be cut
Government cuts have led to the loss of 170 jobs at an office block in Rugby. Staff at the General Social Care Council, based at Myson House in Railway Terrace, have been told by the Government their organisation will be scrapped later this year.

Keyword: Health Professions Council

What every social work student should know

Peter Beresford

Social work teacher Peter Beresford has five top tips for this year's intake:

Almost six and a half thousand students are embarking on professional social work courses in England as undergraduates and graduates. As a social work teacher, I'll be meeting the new students for the first time next week.

Few professionals can expect to receive as much hostility, negative stereotyping and media attacks. Social work is also a job, whether we are talking about child sexual abuse or adult abuse, where practitioners encounter and have to deal with far more than their fair share of horror and cruelty. They also face the frequent additional problems of a lack of managerial and political support.

Yet each autumn term, the new intake arrives with enthusiasm, energy and commitment. This at a time when we don't even know whether there will be jobs for them when they graduate. We first met them as candidates for interview, impressing with their desire to help and increasingly experience of the kind of social problems they will work with. Service users greatly value this 'experiential knowledge' as improving social workers' understanding.

This is a time of massive change for social work. Responsibility for its regulation shortly passes from the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council.

There are fears about the future of social work with adults – however much it is valued. The move to personal budgets has resulted in big job losses, with employers turning instead to less skilled, more malleable workers.

The recommendations of the Munro inquiry into child protection social work have big implications for practitioners, but it's as yet unclear how determinedly they will be implemented by government and what the effects will be on the ground. Meanwhile the problems coming to social work's door are increasing. Cuts in public services, welfare reform and attacks on people on benefit are all hitting its clientele especially hard.

Social work is perhaps one of the easiest professions to do badly and one of the most difficult to do well. As I long ago learned, social work and social care are not rocket science. They are far more complex than that! As this next generation embark on

Keyword: Health Professions Council

their careers, what might be the key things they need and how can they be equipped to be most helpful for their clients-to-be? Over the years as an educator and mental health service user myself, I've developed my own little list, which hopefully will help our future social workers survive and thrive.

- First, know your organization and how to deal with it. Many of the social work scandals that have scapegoated practitioners have been rooted in incompetent and inadequate organisations and hierarchies. You have to get to know how to negotiate these structures effectively. Significantly this is one of the seven professional standards for social workers identified by the social work reform board• Look after your own wellbeing. Social workers can't be sure of getting the supervision and support they need. Make sure you take care of your own physical and mental health. Don't forget your boss is unlikely to find time to visit once you are in hospital. There is now growing recognition of this issue, thanks to the efforts of people like Mike Bush, a former social worker who experienced his own breakdown and now works hard to put practitioners' wellbeing on social work's agenda.

- Remember what service users constantly say. However bad things are, social workers can make a difference – to individuals, families and sometimes communities. Consultation after consultation has found that service users greatly value good social workers. They highlight their importance in their lives and the long lasting beneficial effects they can have.

- Social work is primarily about values and relationships. Service users stress that everything hangs on their relationship with the social worker. From this flows trust, respect, reliability, honesty, being non-judgemental and challenging discrimination which service users especially value in social work. Social work can be concerned with restricting as well as safeguarding service users' rights, but these qualities are equally important in all circumstances. There are strong pressures in local authority social work for 'through-put' and limiting the length of contact with service users. Have confidence that this flies in the face of what we know from service users works.

- Finally don't be alone. Join the union, your professional association and get involved in the new College of Social Work. Build alliances with other professionals, work at strengthening the team you are in. Get their strength around you. Learn from the Social Work Action Network and build links with service users and their organisations. Perhaps most of all, as one experienced practitioner said to me, do not see yourself as different to the service users you work with. If they are 'vulnerable' so are you, and that understanding is your and social work's strength, not weakness.

Keyword: Health Professions Council

Image:

<http://www.nla-eclipsweb.com/images/ImageHandler.ashx?id=2920490>

Caption: Social work students have much to learn - not just in lectures.

Source: David Levene for the
Guardian

<http://www.nla-eclipsweb.com/service/redirector/article/1234552.pdf>

You are in: News

Reform board agrees new framework for social work development

Monday 17 October 2011 14:12

The Social Work Reform Board has agreed a new framework for the continuing professional development of social workers in England.

The reforms are intended to help social workers maintain and develop the core standards required for re-registration, which will be overseen by the Health Professions Council (HPC) from July 2012.

Unlike the General Social Care Council, the HPC does not define either the content or how much CPD is to be undertaken. Instead, every two years a random sample of social workers will be required to provide detailed written evidence of their CPD. The earliest possible audit for social workers will be in 2014.

It is hoped the framework for CPD will:

- Promote opportunities for meaningful and cost-effective learning.
- Foster learning throughout a social worker's career, aligned to the professional capabilities framework.
- Encourage the move from a compliance culture to a learning culture within organisations, as proposed by the Munro review.
- Provide mechanisms for valuing, recognising and recording learning and development achieved through a range of activities.

"Implementation of a new CPD framework will promote and support all social workers to develop their capabilities and extend their knowledge and skills to deal with increasingly complex and specialist work," said Moira Gibb, chair of the reform board, in a letter to board members.

The College of Social Work will promote and implement the framework. It will devise an online tool for planning, recording and reflecting on CPD, in line with the HPC's requirements.

"Social workers will ultimately be responsible for their own CPD, so the emphasis will be on professional development opportunities which help them become even more effective in their jobs," said Claire Barcham, professional practice development advisor at the College.

"For example, they might study part-time for a master's degree or undertake another form of independent study, work shadowing or mentoring, all of which can be recorded as leading to learning and reflection, which enhances practice.

"We will support individual social workers to meet their CPD targets through provision of learning resources and an e-portfolio, and we will be working with employers in the coming months to give CPD a realistic and valuable role in every social worker's practice."

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Related articles

Social work supply and demand model to be unveiled at NCAS

Special report: the Social Work Reform Board's programme for improving the profession

WORKFORCE

Supply and demand model for English local council social workers unveiled

Workforce data is intended to reduce vacancy rates and NQSW unemployment

kirsty.mcgregor@rbi.co.uk

A supply and demand model for estimating how many social workers are needed at a local level in England is being rolled out this week.

The Centre for Workforce

Intelligence (CfWI) has spent the last year creating a system for gathering workforce data, which was one of the Social Work Task Force's 15 recommendations for improving the profession.

It will be used to support workforce decision-making nationally, which could help to reduce high vacancy rates in social work teams and tackle the high levels of unemployment among newly

qualified practitioners.

The newly developed model is being launched at the National Children and Adult Services Conference on 20 October and will be made available to trial sites for testing.

The CfWI will run six regional and up to three national workshops throughout autumn to publicise and demonstrate the model. It is expected that regional experts will be trained in its use and will lead on and support local partnerships.

At a local level, the system will take actual numbers of social workers and estimated time per case, categorising the social workers according to their level of experience and the cases according to their complexity, to produce a forecast.

With sufficient input across a region or group of local authorities the model will produce regional forecasts and, with enough input from regions, a

national forecast.

The model being released is not calibrated and will need to be customised.

A spokesperson for the CfWI said: "We are not making any forecasts or predictions of future supply and demand with this model at this stage. It is simply a model to help people understand supply and demand trends better."

The Social Work Task Force's final report, published in November 2009, found there was a lack of "reliable 'real time' data on the characteristics of the workforce and trends within it (eg, vacancy rates)".

It added: "Equally, there is no agreed model for estimating and influencing the number of social workers needed in local areas."

The initial development of the model covers supply and demand in the statutory sector, but further work is planned to include the private, voluntary and independent sectors.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Social Work Reform Board has also this week agreed a new framework for continuing professional development (CPD) to promote and support social workers in England to develop their skills and knowledge.

The reforms, which will be led by the College of Social Work, will help social workers maintain and develop the core standards for re-registration, set by the [Health Professions](#)

[Council](#) (HPC), from July 2012.

The College will launch an online tool for planning, recording and reflecting on CPD, in line with the HPC's requirements.

In a letter to members of the reform board, its chair, Moira Gibb, said: "We all believe that effective implementation, along with our other reforms, will improve the confidence, effectiveness and status of the social work profession."



You are in: ResourcesUNISON Workforce Zone

Benefits for social workers of College/UNISON membership

Gordon Carson
Monday 24 October 2011 17:34

THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK

The College of Social Work's alliance with UNISON has been the subject of some contention over the past year. Social workers who sign up to the College when it becomes operational in January will automatically become members of the union.

The College's rationale in seeking the partnership is, however, very clear, as outlined in an article for *Community Care* in June by interim co-chairs Maurice Bates and Corinne May-Chahal.

"Given that we want at least 45,000 social workers to join us over the next four years, it makes good sense for us to partner UNISON because it already has about 40,000 social work members in England, far more than any other organisation," they wrote, pointing out that UNISON is recognised by the employers of most social workers.

"It will be relatively easy to market College membership to them, optimising our chances of finding the large numbers we seek."

For its part, UNISON is adamant that its experience of similar agreements in other professions will offer tangible benefits for members of the College.

For example, it has been working with the British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists since 2010, when they entered into a service level agreement. People joining BAPO automatically become members of UNISON, and the partnership has provided extra advice and support to professionals primarily working for private companies, says Sian Rabi-laleh, a national officer in UNISON's health group.

"UNISON has been able to gain recognition to negotiate in some of those companies, including a large private company that makes artificial limbs," she says.

BAPO members are entitled, among other things, to support and representation from UNISON on professional conduct matters, indemnity insurance, preferential rates from UNISON's affinity partners (for example, car insurance), and access to UNISON welfare support and financial assistance.

This partnership is on a relatively small scale – BAPO has around 700 members – but UNISON has also been providing services to a much larger membership body, that of the British Association of Occupational Therapists, for almost two decades.

According to the BAOT, the alliance is as relevant now as it was when the organisations initially decided to work together in 1993.

"BAOT was a trades union in its own right but we were small and finding it hard to get our voice heard," recalls its chief executive, Julia Scott.

"We needed to be prepared for local negotiations on terms and conditions as well as be part of the collective bargaining that was happening across the public sector. The best way to achieve this was via a partnership with one of the larger unions with a strong representation among the health and social care workforce and UK-wide coverage."

Scott says collective bargaining has been a "huge and important benefit" stemming from the agreement, which gives automatic membership of UNISON to the majority of BAOT's 29,000-plus members – except those outside the UK or those solely self-employed in private practice. She also points to the impact of personal support in the workplace from more than 500 UNISON/BAOT stewards.

"They support any member who is being investigated by the Health Professions Council, offer specialist development opportunities, support and encourage a growing stewards' network, provide briefings on workplace issues and support our influencing activities," she adds.

With BAOT members facing "unprecedented changes" in the public sector, Scott believes the relationship with UNISON will become "even more important to our members at an individual level".

It doesn't take too much effort to draw parallels with the challenges and the pace and scale of reforms facing social workers – in the shape of funding cuts and the move to greater personalisation of services to name but two – so undoubtedly the College will be hoping that its members will similarly benefit from the resources of a major, national union.

College of Social Work membership arrangements

- Existing members of UNISON will pay the College a top-up subscription of £60 per year, which will get tax relief.
- Other new, employed members of the College will pay £270 per year for joint membership of the College and UNISON and tax relief will apply to their fee.
- Self-employed social workers will also pay £270 for College membership, which includes relevant insurances, eg, professional indemnity, plus their own cover for conduct and Independent Safeguarding Authority hearings.
- Associate members will pay £60, but won't be eligible for the full range of College services.
- Students (affiliate members) will pay £10 for joint membership.
- College members are free to opt out of UNISON membership if they wish, though the College anticipates that most will choose to join UNISON as part of the £270 joint fee. Members are also free to join other trade unions but the joint membership arrangement will only be with UNISON. If they choose to join another trade union, they will pay the standard College membership fee and then make their own arrangements with the other trade union.

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Social work students set for higher registration fees

Tristan Donovan

Tuesday 01 November 2011 16:48

Social work students in England are likely to face higher registration fees if the Health Professions Council maintains the voluntary register after it absorbs the General Social Care Council.

In a consultation on the future of the student register that was published today, the HPC estimated that the fee could rise from the current £10 a year to between £20 to £53 per annum.

The HPC said the hike was likely because, unlike the GSCC, it does not get government funding and must generate all its income from registration fees.

The consultation, which runs until 2 March 2012, asks for views on whether the HPC continues the voluntary register for social work students or abolishes it and introduce standards for education and training as it does for other professions.

Penny Thompson, chief executive of the GSCC, said the HPC should keep the register going. "Regulation of students is important in order to uphold the standards of the social work profession and to ensure public protection," she said. "When on placements, social work students have unsupervised access to vulnerable service users, so it is important that a level of accountability is maintained."

BASW also called for the voluntary register to be kept. "Just because health professionals don't have a student register, it doesn't mean that we in social work should lower our standards," said Nushra Mansuri, professional officer England at BASW. She added that while a fee rise to £20 was reasonable, £53 "is quite disproportionate".

At present 95% of social work students sign up for the GSCC's register. While registration is voluntary, the GSCC will only fund practice placements involving registered social work students. Of the 160 conduct hearings heard by the GSCC in 2010/11, eight involved students.

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Social workers confused over College and GSCC roles

Tristan Donovan

Friday 04 November 2011 10:00

Half of social workers and social work students do not know the difference between a regulator and a professional body according to a General Social Care Council poll of 360 people.

Penny Thompson, the chief executive of the GSCC, said the finding was understandable given that social work has only been regulated in the past decade and will only get a professional body of its own when the College of Social Work starts work in January 2012.

"It is important that there is clarity about our respective roles," said Thompson. "As the regulator of social workers and their education and training, the GSCC's statutory obligation is to protect the public. We cannot be the champion for the profession – that role belongs to the College of Social Work. A strong regulator as well as a strong professional body are both essential ingredients in developing a strong profession."

Under legislation currently going through Parliament the Health Professions Council is set to take over from the GSCC as England's social work regulator next year.

Related articles

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New regulatory standards place unreasonable expectations on social workers

7th November 2011

BASW has raised concerns that proposed proficiency standards for social workers would place unreasonable expectations on newly-qualified social workers.

Under draft standards published for consultation by the Health Professions Council (HPC), which will regulate social work from July 2012, practitioners would be expected to 'be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgment' in order to be registered by the regulator.

But in its initial submission to the consultation, BASW's Learning and Development Group warns that new social workers would need support over a significant period of time in order to meet the standard.

'No decent employer would or should expose a newly registered social worker to the degree of autonomy implied in standard 4.0,' it states. 'A good employer would be working towards more autonomy within the first year of employment, with continued development to follow.'

Its response, based on wide consultation with members, including students, also says there is 'disquiet' that social workers would be expected to 'manage the physical and emotional impact of their practice' – an expectation outlined under standard 3.5.

BASW says it is essential that there is a statement within the standards that employees must receive 'reasonable' support from their employers to meet the standards.

'It is felt that more work does need to be done on the standards and that more input from practitioners and NQSWs is essential,' the BASW document states, adding that a group of social work practitioners should be brought together to analyse the draft standards before the HPC takes them any further.

Consultation on the draft standards of proficiency for social workers in England

2

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Concern at HPC plans for voluntary student register

7th November 2011

The Health Professions Council (HPC) has launched a consultation on whether it should keep a voluntary register for social work students.

The regulator, which will take over regulation of social work from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) in July 2012, has no powers to compel students to register but, under the Health and Social Care Bill, it could maintain a register that students could join voluntarily.

But students would face a hike in the annual £10 a year registration fee charged by the GSCC because the HPC does not receive financial support from the government. Professionals registered by the HPC pay £76 a year but it not clear whether students will be expected to pay the same fee.

BASW policy officer Joe Godden said the rise in fees would affect applicants from poorer backgrounds and could therefore impact on the diversity of undergraduate registrants, and in turn the profile of tomorrow's social work workforce. He added: "The idea of voluntary registration is, on the face of it, attractive but I think in reality the vast majority of employers taking students on placement would want to be assured and ask that students are registered, therefore in effect making it compulsory."

The GSCC, which has 15,000 students on its register, heard eight cases between 2010-2011 concerning students' conduct, 5% of the total number of conduct hearings over that period. They involved fraud, dishonesty, abuse or convictions for violent behaviour. It has refused registration to nine social work students and registered another seven with conditions between 2005 and 2011.

Mr Godden said students in second or final year placements were given more autonomy than first year students and were far more likely to be working in isolation and with very vulnerable people, often seeing people in their own homes and at times of considerable crisis.

"Good universities go to considerable lengths to do their own checks prior to entry to courses, although there is room for improvement, and universities have a considerable role in monitoring and supporting students on placements," he added.

[The Social Work Students in England consultation is open until March 2012](#)

1

Latest news

- *7th November 2011*

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Confusion rife over College role

Social workers are confused about the difference between a professional body and a regulator, according to a poll by the General Social Care Council, raising concerns about the development of a College of Social Work and the transfer of GSCC powers to the Health Professions Council.

The survey of 360 social workers and social work students found that half did not understand the difference between a college and a regulator.

Penny Thompson, the chief executive of the GSCC, said the confusion was understandable given that social work has only been regulated in the past decade and will only get a professional body of its own when the College of Social Work starts work in January 2012.

"It is important that there is clarity about our respective roles," she said. "As the regulator of social workers and their education and training, the GSCC's statutory obligation is to protect the public. We cannot be the champion for the profession –



Thompson: Clarity on roles needed

that role belongs to the College of Social Work."

The finding came as a meeting of British Association of Social Workers members in Birmingham saw it back a series of motions that enable it to merge with the College of Social Work, despite the breakdown in merger talks between the two organisations back in September.

Hilton Dawson, the chief executive of BASW, said: "We've been thrown out of the process but we've affirmed our willingness to support a joint college when it is on a proper, ethical footing."



The Week

CHILDREN

CHILDREN IN CARE

Children who have been looked after for more than one year are to be given individual savings accounts, each with an initial payment of £200, the Department for Education has announced.

The scheme, worth £16.7m until 2015, was first announced by the chancellor this year and will offer looked-after children junior individual savings accounts that can be held in cash or shares and will mature.

The first accounts, which holders can access when they turn 18, will be opened next year with an initial £200 payment and it is then hoped that interested individuals and organisations will contribute further payments.



Teather: Voluntary sector contracts

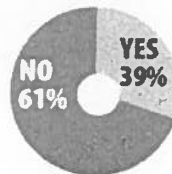
DISABLED CHILDREN

Children's minister Sarah Teather has revealed which voluntary and community organisations will gain contracts to deliver support for children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities under plans outlined in the recent green paper.

The Department for

Poll results

LAST TIME: Does your local authority offer free workplace parking?



NEXT ISSUE: Are social work management qualifications worthwhile? Vote@www.communitycare.co.uk

Education is providing funding of around £6m a year for organisations to deliver support around short breaks, providing information and help to parents and helping disabled young people and those with SEN prepare for employment, training and independent living after they leave school.

→ More children's news at www.communitycare.co.uk/news/children

BLOG: HOSTILE PARENTS

It was good to see Jim Wild's article in a recent issue of *Community Care* raising the issue of violence and aggression against social workers, writes *Brian Atkins*. As Jim points out, the anxiety this creates in workers can greatly affect their judgement and confidence and lead to poor decision-making. Attempts have been made to deal with the issue of violence in the past, but these initiatives appear to have had little or no long term impact. In fact it

seems to be getting worse. I hope that Jim's article and the *Community Care* campaign will help raise this issue again, and inspire some political will to make significant inroads into the problem.

As suggested in this article, the solution is not rocket science, but simply a question of commitment and application by employers and the willingness of workers to adopt safer ways of working.

● Guest blogger Brian Atkins is director of ETC, a social work training and consultancy company.
→ www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/childrens-services-blog

ADULTS

MENTAL HEALTH

The co-ordination of mental health care for users should be outsourced from social workers and NHS colleagues to the third sector to improve the independence and creativity of support.

Currently, patients who receive specialist care under the Care Programme Approach have their care managed and brokered by "care co-ordinators", typically social workers or NHS professionals working for mental health trusts.

However, a report from the Centre for Social Justice said this created a conflict of interest on the grounds that trusts provide services directly, and backed giving this role to voluntary sector organisations that did not themselves provide services.

→ More adults' news at www.communitycare.co.uk/news/adults

CARE MANAGERS

A campaign has been launched to raise the "disappointing" status of registered care managers to ensure they are regarded as "recognised professionals" on a par with doctors, nurses and social workers.

Backed by four organisations including the Social Care Association and the National Skills Academy for Social Care,

the campaign is looking to establish a support body for registered care managers and improve networking and shared learning, in order to boost the quality of care.

Stat of the week

60%

of councils have spent money transferred from the NHS on reablement services

Source: Community Care survey



Care home managers: status boost

The organisations have written to care services minister Paul Burstow seeking government backing for the campaign.

BLOG: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Under the Legal Aid and Sentencing Bill, only domestic violence victims who can prove "a high risk of violence" will qualify for support.

This is likely to require them to have reported the abuse to police as reports from refuges and GPs will not be accepted as sufficient.

In a debate, Helen Goodman, MP for Bishop Auckland, said: "Most women experience 20 episodes of domestic violence before they report it to the police. I am afraid the [government] is condemning more women to suffer domestic violence in silence."

Justice minister Jonathan

Djanogly said: "I am not questioning the integrity of genuine victims. However, many people during were concerned about providing an incentive for unfounded allegations?"

But how can anyone tell, when abuse is reported, who is "genuine"? Looks like shaky ground.

→ www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/adult-care-blog

Quote of the week

"Quicker decisions will not necessarily be the right ones. Speed should not come at an equally high cost"

ONE SOCIAL WORKER'S RESPONSE TO THE FAMILY JUSTICE REVIEW

WORKFORCE

HIGHER FEES FOR STUDENTS

Social work students in England are likely to face higher registration fees if the **Health Professions Council** maintains the voluntary register after it absorbs the General Social Care Council.

In a consultation on the future of the student register released last week, the HPC estimated that the fee could rise from the current £10 per year to between £20 and £53 per annum. The HPC said the hike was likely because, unlike the GSCC, it does not receive government funding and must generate all its income from registration fees.

The consultation asks whether the HPC should continue the voluntary register for social work

students or abolish it and instead introduce standards for education and training as it is the case with other professions regulated by the HPC.

The consultation runs until 2 March 2012.

CENTREPOINT STAFF STRIKE

Unite members at Centrepoin are to go on strike three times this month in response to the homelessness charity's plans to cut staff salaries.

The strikes were backed by 11 of the 20 Unite members who voted and follows a previous ballot in September that Centrepoin challenged the legality of. The union's 88 members at Centrepoin are now set to strike on 10, 11 and 30 November.

The dispute centres on Centrepoin's plans to introduce pay cuts in response to the loss of government contracts to deliver housing and support for young homeless people.

Centrepoin said it has already improved its proposals twice during five months of negotiation with Unite and has offered to limit the maximum salary reduction for individual staff members to 10%.

→ More workforce news at www.communitycare.co.uk/news/workforce

BLOG: £700 TO PARK

Doncaster Council is offering employees a choice between a 4% pay cut and losing their job, according to Unison. And the cherry on the cake appears to be a plan to charge them £700 a year for parking, even when their car is used for essential work business.

Social workers would clearly fall into this category because they often have to use their cars to visit clients. The issue has prompted debate on CareSpace with some suggesting the proposed charges are unjustifiable, but others have suggested free parking at work is a perk, not a right.

→ www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/social-work-blog

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NEWSPAPER MAN The winner of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's annual photography competition, which sets out to challenge the stigma associated with mental illness, was this extraordinary composition from Chris West, called *Reading Between the Lines*

MILIBAND GETS THE NOD FROM EMPLOYERS

Labour leader Ed Miliband came in for some flak two months ago when he told trade union members caught up in the local government pensions dispute that they should desist from striking during negotiations. Whether you agreed with Miliband or disagreed with him, it was a point of view honestly held (I hope). But it was also a standpoint that one could imagine the employers nodding along to, much like those toy dogs that were once the must-have accessory for rear parcel shelves of Ford Cortinas.



→ Read on at www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/social-policy-blog/

You are in: News

Social workers express ire over registration double whammy

Tristan Donovan

Wednesday 16 November 2011 16:00

Social workers expressed their indignation at Community Care Children & Families Live 2011 after the prospect of having to pay twice to keep their place on the social work register was raised.

At a session explaining the plan to move the social care register from the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council, they were told that differences in the renewal approach of the two organisations could result in them paying twice next year.

The GSCC operates a rolling register where individuals renew on the same date each year but the HPC uses a fixed date system where every professional renews their membership of the register on the same day.

Sherry Malik, deputy chief executive at the GSCC, and Mark Potter, stakeholder manager at the HPC, confirmed that this would mean that social workers who have to renew their registration next year before the transfer will have to pay the GSCC fee of £30 and then renew their registration again with the HPC at a cost of £76.

For example a social worker who renews their registration with the GSCC in April will need to pay out again in July when the HPC takes over management of the register bring the total for the year to £106.

One audience member said he felt he was being "unfairly treated" while another said: "I feel aggrieved, we do not have a choice - it is like a monopoly."

Malik said she recognised the unfairness but said that the cost of calculating each individual's payment would be prohibitive and added that the responsibility for the decision lay with the Department of Health.

Both speakers also urged social workers to ensure that they keep the GSCC informed of any changes to their contact details in the run-up to the transfer so that they did not miss vital information that could affect their registration.

What do you think? Join the debate on CareSpace

Keep up to date with the latest developments in social care. Sign up to our daily and weekly emails

You are in: News

GSCC launches boundaries guidance for social workers

Kirsty McGregor
Monday 21 November 2011 12:43



The General Social Care Council has launched guidance on professional boundaries for social workers in England following concerns that some practitioners are abusing their position of power.

About a fifth of all cases referred to the regulator involve inappropriate relationships with service users, according to the GSCC's data.

Past cases have included social workers allowing service users to visit their homes, sharing their personal phone number, buying service users gifts and failing to declare contact outside of working hours.

The GSCC commissioned Sheffield Hallam University and the charity Witness (now the Clinic for Boundaries Studies) to carry out research on the issue. The research concluded that a definitive list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour would not be appropriate, given the grey areas encountered by social workers on a daily basis.

Instead, the GSCC's guidance examines cases in which social workers were found to have breached professional boundaries and presents discussion points for each.

The guidance is divided into three sections: relationships, upholding public trust and confidence in social care services and challenging colleagues' professional boundary breaches.

It also includes a list of general questions social workers should consider whenever they have concerns about their practice.

Penny Thompson, chief executive of the GSCC, said: "We have issued this guidance in the hope that social workers will engage in reflective discussion with colleagues and managers about ethical issues that arise in practice and discuss behaviours, both in and out of work, which could constitute breaching professional boundaries."

Maurice Bates, interim co-chair of the College of Social Work, added that the College would work closely with the GSCC and its successor body, the Health Professions Council, to ensure social workers maintained the "high standards of integrity that the public expects".

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Social workers may pay twice to register next year

Social workers could pay twice to register next year

Guardian Social Care

British Association of Social Workers launches 'no' campaign after social workers are told they could pay twice for registration next year and significantly higher fees afterwards

Social workers in England may have to pay twice to keep their place on the social work register when the responsibility moves from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to the Health Professions Council (HPC) in July 2012 – with the HPC also planning to charge more than twice as much as the GSCC.

An anomaly in the two systems means that social workers who are currently on the GSCC register will renew their registration on the annual date of when they first joined, whereas the HPC's system has everybody renewing their membership on the same set date every year.

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) said that this will mean an overlap in dates for some social workers who have to renew their registration before the transfer, leaving them being charged twice for the same service. According to the HPC, this is because it is an independent regulator and does not receive government subsidy, unlike the GSCC, registration fees are more than double the current amount paid by social workers in England - £76 instead of the current £30.

BASW has written a letter to Andrew Lansley, the health secretary, urging him to take action, and has also launched an e-petition for social workers. It wants the government to synchronise the different renewal systems so that fees are only taken once.

Ruth Cartwright, BASW England manager, said: "Social workers are already seeing registration fees doubling because of the move to the HPC, and now they face paying twice to undergo the same administrative process." *

She explained that social workers across the country have already had years of pay cuts and pay freezes, leaving many social workers struggling financially.

"The rising demand for social work services and reductions in posts has led to serious issues of low morale, excessive levels of unpaid overtime and work fatigue. Social workers do not get a choice to refuse to pay this fee, it is compulsory. We want the government to sort this out and not penalise hard working and under paid social

Keyword: Health Professions Council

workers," Cartwright added.

The plans were first revealed at last week's Community Care Children & Families Live event.

* Correction: the Health Professions Council has said that it will not be charging a one off scrutiny fee to social workers registered with the GSCC on 1 August 2012, as this article initially stated. Instead, they will automatically transfer for free to the new registration body, to be renamed the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), with a free period of registration lasting until 1 December 2012. HCPC will allow the cost of paying the £76 annual fee to be spread through direct debit payments of £38 every six months.

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<http://www.nla-eclipsweb.com/service/redirector/article/1407900.pdf>

Social workers could pay twice to register next year

British Association of Social Workers launches 'no' campaign after social workers are told they could pay twice for registration next year and significantly higher fees afterwards

Guardian Social Care
Guardian Professional, Monday 21 November 2011 11.09 GMT

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Social worker fees will be 'appropriate and realistic'



By Kirsty McGregor, Workforce Editor, on November 23, 2011 2:51 PM | [No Comments](#)



Marc Seale, chief executive of the Health Professions Council (HPC), responds to our article, *Social workers could pay twice to register next year.*

"The HPC is conscious that some social workers may have to pay both their General Social Care Council (GSCC) and HPC registration fees next year, however, the decision for the GSCC to continue to charge registration fees in 2012 ahead of the transfer is one for them and the Department of Health," writes Seale.

"The HPC's fee is one of the lowest fees across all of the independent UK health and social care regulators. It has remained the same for over three years and, being mindful of the current economic climate, the HPC council recently agreed there would be no increase this year.

"The HPC receives no subsidy from government and, as a multi-profession regulator, is committed to ensuring we have an appropriate and realistic level of income to enable us to operate effectively. As the GSCC does receive a subsidy from the government, they are able to charge £30.

"The HPC is aware that it can be difficult for graduates to find employment and that it takes time to become established in their chosen profession. For this reason, newly qualified graduates registering with the HPC within two years receive a 50% reduction in the fee in their first two professional years. There is a one-off £53 scrutiny fee, but this is necessary to process the application and applies to all our professions."

The registration process for social workers will be as follows:

- 1 August 2012: All GSCC registrants automatically become HCPC registrants
- Within two weeks all social workers on the HCPC register will be invited to pay a registration fee for a period of two years starting on 1 December 2012.
- They can pay in a single instalment of £152 to cover two years (£76 per annum) on the register or they can set up a direct debit payment of £38 paid every six months. No scrutiny fee applies. Social workers will have a period of three and a half months in which to pay the HCPC.
- Thereafter the registration period for all social workers will operate over a fixed two-year renewal cycle in line with all our current professions.
- The registration fee is tax deductible. This means that the £76 annual fee is reduced by 22% (for standard rate taxpayers), reducing the fee by £16.72 to £59.28. The tax deduction will be made by an amendment to your PAYE code.

[More information about the HPC's fees and payments structure](#)

[More information on the transfer](#)

5 1 Email Share 6

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How to get in touch

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LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN

Education inadequate at many children's homes

More than one in 10 children's homes that provide on-site schooling are not providing an adequate education, according to figures in Ofsted's annual report, published this week.

It compares with only 2% of schools in England which are rated inadequate.

However, the finding was not necessarily related to the quality

of care provided in the homes with some homes providing satisfactory care but inadequate education.

Ofsted director of social care John Goldup described the finding as "challenging".

"The children and young people in residential care are usually the most damaged and vulnerable children in our society," he said.

"It is vital that they are getting an outstanding education in order to improve their life chances."

Overall, however, Ofsted's annual report showed that children's homes continue to improve with 21% of children's homes rated as outstanding in August this year compared with 14% in September 2010. Only 2% were inadequate compared with 5%.

The report covers the first six months of data after Ofsted's change to an inspection framework focused more on outcomes for children's homes.

Goldup said the new framework had not had a massive impact on the profile of results. He said the framework would be reviewed next April.

→ Full Goldup interview, p16

WORKFORCE

Social workers will be forced to pay twice for registration next year

Switch from GSCC will cost professionals because renewals process differs

comcare.workforce@rbi.co.uk
Social workers expressed their indignation at Community Care Children & Families Live 2011 after the prospect of having to pay twice to keep their place on the social work register was raised.

At a session explaining the plan to move the social care register from the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council, they were told that differences in the renewal approach of the two organisations could result in them paying twice next year.

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Sherry Malik, deputy chief executive at the GSCC, and Mark Potter, stakeholder manager at the HPC, confirmed that this would mean that social workers who need to renew their registration next year before the transfer will have to pay the GSCC fee of £30 and then renew their registration again with the HPC at a cost of £76.

For example, a social worker who renews their registration with the GSCC in April will need



Cartwright: "It's the last thing social workers need now"

to pay out again in July when the HPC takes over management of the register, bringing the total for the year to £106.

One audience member said he felt he was being "unfairly treated" while another said: "I feel aggrieved, we do not have a choice – it is like a monopoly."

Following the session, a CareSpace user noted that some student social workers could even end up paying three times within 12 months. Once to renew their student registration, again when they qualify and a third time when the HPC takes over.

Malik said she recognised the unfairness but said that the cost of calculating each individual's payment would be prohibitive and added that the responsibility for the decision lay with the Department of Health.

Both speakers urged social workers to ensure they kept the

Your views on...double registration

● **Selks:** Not only paying twice, but paying over three times as much in total! Absolute rip-off.

● **Maurice:** The just way forward is for GSCC to only charge pro rata as its demise comes closer. It's not that hard to divide £30 by 12 and then make the appropriate charge. Granted, it doesn't address the outrageous hike in the cost of registration once we change over.

● **Jellybean1:** I, along with many other soon-to-qualify social workers, get the joy of paying three times to register to do my job in the next 12 months – once to renew my student registration in December, again when I qualify in January, and again when we transfer to the HPC in August. It's disgraceful.

● **RosG:** There are also tax implications. GSCC fees are tax deductible. I presume College fees will also be. But I doubt we will be able to claim both in one year! The whole thing is another example of the poor logic behind much of the recent decision making.

● **Quixote:** "Prohibitively expensive to calculate"? Their problem, not ours. We never asked to register in the first place. Mass disobedience required here, unions (and BASW) need to co-ordinate it.

→ Have your say at: <http://bit.ly/sTaoTa>

carespace
www.communitycare.co.uk/carespace

GSCC informed of any changes to their contact details in the run-up to the transfer so that they did not miss vital information that could affect their registration.

The British Association of Social Workers said it is raising the matter with ministers, including health secretary Andrew Lansley, and planned to launch an e-petition to draw the issue to the attention of parliament.

"Local authority social workers across England have endured several years of pay cuts, pay freezes and reduced car allowances and

social work is not a well paid profession," said Ruth Cartwright, BASW's England manager.

"Increased demand for services and the freezing of recruitment has also led to low morale, excessive unpaid overtime and fatigue. The last thing social workers need now is additional expenses to register as professionals."

In a letter to ministers, BASW criticises how social workers could be expected to pay for registration more than once next year and the rise in the registration fee from £30 to £76 a year.

the**guardian**

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JOEPUBLIC
BLOG

Why we must do more to protect those receiving home care

Without workforce regulation, the potential for poor care to remain hidden is enormous



When care takes place in people's own homes, risks are magnified. Photograph: Vstock 12e/Getty Images/Tetra images RF

The findings from the Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry into home care for older people shone a welcome light on the quality of care provided and its impact on people's autonomy and dignity.

As the commission notes, good home care is invaluable in enabling people to remain in their own homes and to continue to live independently and to exercise control over their lives.

However, despite the finding that around half of all the people who gave evidence to the inquiry "expressed real satisfaction with their home care", there can be no grounds for complacency.

People are reluctant to express dissatisfaction or make complaints, and can be particularly concerned about repercussions. The concerns highlighted by the commission include: lack of care and neglect of needs; disregard for privacy and dignity; poor attitudes and patronising manner; rough handling; and financial abuse.

Many difficulties with rushed care visits are a result of the way they are commissioned (often in 15-minute time slots) and the low price paid by many local authority contracts. The logistics of delivering good quality home care are also inherently difficult – people typically all need help at the beginning and end of the day (when getting up and going to bed), and care assistants will frequently struggle to visit all their clients within a reasonable time. However, nothing excuses disrespect, abuse or lack of compassion.

The Care Quality Commission attempted to pre-empt the report the day before publication by announcing it will carry out "a themed inspection programme of home care services" (involving about 250 providers). This is important, but it isn't enough.

The care services minister, Paul Burstow, told Radio 4's Today programme that the strategy would be one of "more snap inspections, backed up by tough enforcement".

The obvious hole in this approach is the absence of adequate levers. Although care providers are registered with and inspected by CQC, the staff providing the care are not regulated. Burstow referred to an intention to introduce a 'code of practice', and claimed that when the coalition government came into office none existed. He is wrong.

The United Kingdom Home Care Association has long operated a code of practice which member organisations must sign up to. Equally, the social care workforce regulator the General Social Care Council introduced codes of practice in 2002 that were aimed at all "social care workers and employers of social care workers describing the standards of conduct and practice within which they should work".

It was surprising that the minister made no mention of the role of workforce regulation, or offered any clarification about the future direction for social care. The General Social Care Council is to be abolished on 31 July 2012 and its functions transferred to the Health Professions Council (HPC).

However, the government indicated last year that it is committed to "reducing unnecessary costs of regulation" and in the current public spending environment it does "not believe that the statutory regulation of home care workers, or the wider adult social care workforce can be justified". Instead, the HPC is to explore the scope for establishing a voluntary register of social care workers. What that might look like and how it would relate to improving public protection in home care is unknown.

Any voluntary registration system would need to be open not only to care staff working with providers already registered with CQC, but also to people working as personal assistants (PAs). The development of personal budgets means that increasingly people who use home care services will do so in a variety of ways. Contracting directly with providers or employing people as PAs will increase. The opportunity to choose to employ people who are on a register, who sign up to clear codes of practice and who take responsibility for the standard of their own practice should be available.

Most people who work in social care are committed to what they do and to providing good quality care, but the potential for poor care – and worse – to remain hidden from view is enormous. When care takes place in people's own homes, behind closed doors and out of sight, those risks are magnified.

The report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission is a further reminder to both the CQC and HPC that the regulatory framework is incomplete, inconsistent and currently unable to offer the safeguards that are needed to protect the dignity and wellbeing of people who use home care services. More inspection and a further code of practice may be part of the solution, but it is not sufficient.

• Melanie Henwood is an independent social care consultant. She was a lay member and vice chair of the [General Social Care Council](#)

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[BASW - The College of Social Work](#)

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BASW surprise at solitary instance of restoration

5th December 2011

BASW has expressed its surprise that just one of 167 social workers banned from practising by social care regulators across the UK has reapplied to join the social care register, restating its belief that “rehabilitation is a vital tool in the social work armoury”.

Under current care council rules, practitioners who have been removed for misconduct can apply again to rejoin the register after three years. They will then face a committee and must show evidence that they addressed the causes of their misconduct and are of good character.

Across the UK, 120 social workers have been told then can no longer practise in England, while 29 have been removed from the register in Scotland, 15 in Wales and three in Northern Ireland. To date, however, just one has reapplied to join the register.

Commenting on the findings, the head of BASW’s Advice and Representation Service Marcia Lawrence-Russell said: “It is a vital that the chance to rehabilitate and demonstrate improved training, remorse and awareness of one’s mistakes is incorporated into our regulatory system.

“It is vital in all four parts of the UK but with the advent of the Health Professions Council (HPC) in England this year it is a principle that must be carried forward into the new HPC framework.”

A restoration committee of the General Social Care Council heard a case in May involving Solomon Beckford, who was removed from the register in 2007 after he had been found to have breached the confidentiality of a victim of domestic violence, lied to his manager, made false claims to his manager regarding the extent of his experience in the field of domestic violence and provided false information in applications for jobs and on his GSCC registration form.

Mr Solomon’s restoration appeal faltered after it emerged that he had not gained sufficient credits for the course he claimed to have taken during his absence from the profession. Separately, although he had claimed that he had voluntarily given up his role as a school governor, the school in question later revealed it had disqualified him because he had not attended meetings for six months.

The restoration decided that he was not suitable or competent to return to the register and he could put the public at risk.

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The recession led to less churn in social work, says Gibb

Kirsty McGregor
Tuesday 06 December 2011 10.43

Has the recession helped social work? The obvious answer might appear to be "no"; it prompted mass job losses, a public sector pay freeze and the current furore over pensions. But in other ways, it has had an unexpectedly positive impact on the profession, argues Moira Gibb, chair of the Social Work Reform Board.

Speaking to Community Care ahead of the board's two-year anniversary, Gibb says the recession has led to less churn in the social work job market, particularly in England. "People aren't moving around so much, so it feels calmer." Despite the bleak economic climate, Gibb seems confident that the reform board's programme of change has made a difference. "I do sense we have changed the tenor of the conversation about social work, both in terms of its public image and political attitudes."

The reform board was set up in January 2010 to take forward the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force. Gibb says she will continue to lead the board until it winds down in mid-2012. In the meantime, it is busy finding homes for the different projects it has been working on, including the development of a national set of standards for social workers and their employers and a framework for continuing professional development.

The board expects three bodies to take on this work; the College of Social Work ("Assuming the College does come to pass, and that's my expectation," says Gibb), the Health Professions Council (HPC) and the office of the chief social worker. The College is due to formally launch in January, the HPC is expected to take over the regulation of social workers from the General Social Care Council in July and a chief social worker is yet to be appointed - so next year will mark another significant period of change for the profession.

Gibb has, of course, kept a close eye on the dispute between the interim board of the College of Social Work and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), which has been raging on and off for almost two years and blew up again recently during a select committee hearing. Like many other people in the sector, Gibb fully supports the College of Social Work, but hopes its interim board can find some way to work with BASW and avoid the setting up of two rival colleges.

"When the College announced it was unable to come together with BASW, I wrote to both saying 'please don't do anything in the meantime to damage possible future alignment'," she explains. "We can't afford to have two [colleges]; social work is not a strong enough profession."

Finally, Gibb admits that, while the reform board has made progress, the kind of whole-systems change required is difficult. But she also points out that the board has been operating without a ministerial edit, meaning any changes or achievements made so far have been sector-led. She adds: "If we can pull this off, it will be so much more positive than something that was top-down."

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College of Social Work to launch without BASW

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High tensions over establishment of social work college

A dispute between the CSW and the British Association of Social Workers continues – but at least they are still willing to talk. Terry Philpot unpicks the controversy



Terry Philpot
Guardian Professional, Thursday 8 December 2011 10.01 GMT

A guardian author



A dispute between the CSW and the British Association of Social Workers continues – but at least they are willing to talk. Photograph: Dona Monroe/Getty Images/Uppercut RF

Social work's seeming inability to organise itself is illustrated again in the on-off struggle to create a college of social work, which has included accusations, counter-accusations and legal actions – both initiated and threatened.

The College of Social Work (CSW) was proposed by the Department of Health's social work task force in 2009, as (one would have thought) an uncontroversial and effective way for social work to stand up for itself.

Analogous to the royal medical colleges, the idea was that a college would represent and support social workers, speak on their behalf to press, public and politicians, and be responsible for standard setting and professional development. There are 84,000 practising social workers in England, and the hope is that the college will eventually cover the 106,000 across the UK. It has signed up 8,300 social workers as "prospective members" prior to a formal launch next month when it will start to recruit paying members.

However, one problem is that social workers are not joiners. The UK-wide British Association of Social Workers (BASW) currently has 14,250 members, the highest number in its 41 year history. Unison, one of eight unions with social worker members, is said to have 43,000 social worker members.

Then there is the cost to individuals: an annual subscription of £270 has been mooted but not finally decided. Yet some social workers are paying fees to Unison and BASW and all social workers must pay a fee to be registered with the regulatory and disciplinary body, the General Social Care Council. (Next year, when the GSCC is

absorbed into the Health Professions Council, social workers will have to pay fees to both the GSCC and the HPC.)

So, in order to secure the financial independence the CSW needs when government funding stops in April 2012 and to boost membership, it made a deal with Unison, whereby all college members would automatically become Unison members unless they choose to opt out.

So far, so might-be-good, except BASW, which would subsume itself and its assets within the college if an acceptable agreement were reached, is set against favouring a single union.

BASW also registered the college's name while engaged in negotiations but didn't tell anyone, and now action is being taken to wrest that ownership from them. Maurice Bates, a co-chair of CSW, walked out of one meeting when pressed for details of the Unison-college agreement (these were only released when the Commons education select committee pressed for them).

Last September CSW excluded BASW from further participation in the project on the basis of what the latter claims was false information in a risk assessment report drawn up by the college.

When Hilton Dawson, chief executive of BASW and a former Labour MP, threw his hat in the ring for the CSW's chief executive post – currently being advertised – he didn't get the job.

Last month the education select committee wrote to Tim Loughton, the education under-secretary, stating that relations between BASW and the college had "inexorably broken down" largely due to the Unison deal about which it, too, raised concerns and asked ministers to take a lead in getting the two bodies to re-open talks.

The conflict has engendered much ill feeling. BASW refers to "dubious deals between self-interested individuals and organisations behind closed doors" while it has been accused of "unethical and unprincipled behaviour".

CSW has decided to go it alone and launch without BASW – but could face a judicial review.

Despite all the tension, both organisations say they are still willing to discuss the issue.

"We are ready, willing and able to sit down with anyone to talk about creating a strong and effective and sustainable college – and to commit our resources to it," Dawson says.

Dorit Braun, CSW's project director, says: "We believe that negotiations are always possible. We have a constitution that covers the UK and objectives that are consistent with the ambitions of BASW for a UK college. We remain open to getting back to negotiations once we are established".

Will the launch be hobbled by BASW remaining out of the fold? Could there, anyway, be an agreement when the sticking point is the Unison deal?

There is a real prospect of two colleges – which is what BASW says will happen if no agreement is reached. All of this may convince people that social workers, trained to help others, have difficulty in helping themselves.

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You are in: News

Registration consultation for social workers

Kirsty McGregor

Thursday 08 December 2011 10:35



The Health Professions Council has today launched a consultation on setting the registration cycle for social workers in England.

Social workers are currently expected by the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to renew in three yearly cycles on the anniversary of their initial registration.

However, the Health Professions Council (HPC), which is due to take over responsibility for the social care register in July 2012, expects professionals to renew at a set date every two years.

If the GSCC's register is transferred as planned on 31 July 2012, social workers in England will be required to register with the HPC for the first time between August and 30 November 2012. The HPC is proposing that the end date for the registration cycle for social workers would then be 30 November in even numbered years.

Last month it was revealed that the timing of the transfer could result in some social workers having to pay twice to keep their place on the register.

The consultation will close on 29 February 2012. Take part

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HPC launches consultation on registration renewal date for social workers

12 Dec 2011 12:09

The Health Professions Council (HPC) launched a consultation inviting stakeholders for their views on the proposed registration renewal date for social workers in England recently. This is part of their preparatory work before opening the Register for the social workers next year.

The Health and Social Care Bill, currently before Parliament, provides for the transfer of the regulation of social workers in England from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to the HPC. Subject to Royal Assent, the GSCC's register of social workers in England is expected to transfer to the HPC on 31 July 2012.

This consultation will be of particular interest to social workers in England as they will be regulated by the HPC in the future. The HPC renews its registration in two-yearly cycles for each profession registered with it, unlike the GSCC, where individuals renew in three-yearly cycles on the anniversary of their initial registration.

The HPC are proposing that the registration cycle for social workers in England should end on 30 November in even numbered years.

The consultation runs until 29 February 2012 and it can be accessed here: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations/>



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Quango reforms take a leap forward as Public Bodies Act receives Royal Assent

15 December 2011
CAB 247-11

The Government's plans to radically increase the transparency and accountability of public bodies took a leap forward when the Public Bodies Act received Royal Assent.

This significant milestone in the reform programme will enable the Government to push on with its plans to simplify the quango landscape. Reforms using the powers in the new Public Bodies Act will begin immediately.

The Act will build on reforms that are already removing duplication and waste in public bodies and, along with simultaneous reductions in spending, will save £2.6 billion in administrative costs alone by 2014/15.

The Government committed to reviewing all public bodies in October 2010 and has already made swift progress including abolishing the Teachers TV Board of Governors and the Government Strategic Marketing Advisory Board. But, where public bodies were established by Acts of Parliament new legislation was needed to reform them. This is now in place.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude said:

"We will deliver the largest overhaul of quangos in a generation. We said we would increase transparency and accountability, cut out waste and duplication, and we have."

"This does not end here, we are today announcing the first tranche of new regular reviews for the remaining public bodies so the quango state will never again be allowed to spiral out of control."

In October 2010 the Government announced the results of its review of more than 900 public bodies. The reforms will lead to the total number of public bodies reducing by more than 250. This includes 199 ceasing to be public bodies. Where their functions are needed they will either be brought back into Government, devolved to local Government, or moved out of Government. Where they are not needed, they will be abolished altogether. Additionally 120 bodies will be merged into 56 and a further 176 bodies will be substantially reformed.

The reforms in the new Public Bodies Act will begin immediately and include:

- abolishing the Regional Development Agencies, and delivering a new approach to growth and regeneration including Local Enterprise Partnerships which will shift power to local businesses and communities;
- transferring British Waterways functions to a new charitable body. This will give waterways' users and the communities that live alongside them, greater involvement in how they're managed and contribute to their sustainability in the long-term;
- abolishing The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission as a non-departmental public body and transferring functions back to the Department for Work and Pensions ensuring that accountability and decision making responsibility for child maintenance sits with Ministers;
- legally abolishing Food from Britain as the body has been defunct since 2009 but was never formally abolished. There are other bodies which provide export promotion services and are well placed to serve UK exporters; and
- abolishing the Aircraft Industries Arbitration Tribunal and transferring responsibility to HM Court and Tribunals Service. The tribunal was created in the 1980s and has not met for at least the past 25 years so transferring the functions will reduce duplication and waste.

Those reforms which did not require legislation have already progressed swiftly and include:

- Horse Race Totalisator Board (The Tote), which has been sold to the private betting firm Betfred. It was a public body with functions that are better suited to the private sector.
- The Design Council, which is now a charity. It was a public body that didn't need to be controlled by the Government. It has also increased efficiency by taking on some existing functions of the Commission for Architecture in the Built Environment.
- The Hearing Aid Council, which closed in 2010. The important job of regulating hearing aid dispensers transferred to the Health Professions Council who are already experienced in delivering high quality regulation as the regulator for 14 other healthcare professions.

The reforms don't stop here. All quangos will be reviewed on a regular basis. Starting with 31 Non Department Public Bodies (NDPBs) being reviewed in 2011/12 and all NDPBs being reviewed every three years. This will not only make sure that quangos whose functions are no longer needed don't remain, but the reviews will also encourage bodies to explore new models of delivery and to drive through even more efficient ways of delivering public services.

Notes to Editors

- The list of the 31 Non-Departmental Public Bodies that departments have identified for reviews in the first year of the three year review cycle are listed in the Written Ministerial Statement on Public Bodies Reform published today.
- Further information about the Public Bodies Reform programme including the Public Bodies Act and an updated list of Public Bodies being reformed can be found here.
- The Public Bodies Act provided the legal framework in order for the Government to carry out its public bodies reforms. The Act enables the reforms to public bodies to be implemented where legislation is needed. Some bodies that are to be reformed were set up in legislation so new powers were needed to be able to abolish or merge them, transfer or devolve their functions, or reform the way they operate.
- The Public Bodies Act is an enabling act which means it will not itself make any changes to public bodies. It will

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reforms that require legislation and that are not already covered in other departmental bills,

- create legislative powers which give ministers the ability to abolish or merge bodies; modify a body's constitutional or funding arrangements, or transfer its functions elsewhere, and
- give Secretaries of State the necessary powers to take forward changes to their bodies in secondary legislation when they are ready to do so

These powers can only be used in conjunction with important safeguards around prior consultation, Parliamentary scrutiny and judicial independence.

14 feature regulatory changes



Andrew Truby considers what the transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council will mean for your practice and the standards expected for the profession as a whole

The waves of change

In the end it may not have been the promised bonfire of the quangos, but the coalition government's proposals for reform of arm's length bodies, such as the General Social Care Council (GSCC) – *Liberating the NHS: Report of arm's length bodies review* (July 2010) – will herald significant change for the future regulation of the social work profession. Subject to royal assent of the Health and Social Care Bill, the regulatory

functions of the GSCC will be transferred to the Health Professions Council (HPC) on 31 July 2012. The time for 'pause and reflect' has passed.

The Health Professions Council (HPC) – or the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), regulating health, psychological and social work professions, as it will be known when social workers join its register – may seem like yet another new acronym to remember, but this is more than just a rebranding exercise. The HPC is a

modern (and robust) regulator, and the inclusion of social workers on its register will bring it into a regulation environment which is firmly principle and outcome based.

The HPC currently regulates 15 healthcare professions including paramedics, radiographers and art therapists. Core guidance for all registrants is contained in the publication *Standards of Conduct of Performance and Ethics*. This consists of 14 separate duties including acting in the best interests of service users, respecting

confidentiality and keeping accurate records.

To all intents and purposes these duties mirror what is contained in the GSCC's Code of Practice and should not come as a surprise to social work practitioners. The core standards guidance is supported by guidance on continuing professional development (CPD) and education and training, and social workers should note that the requirement of 15 days or 90 hours Post Registration Training or Learning over a three-year period will also change; the HPC require registrants to focus their CPD activities in areas which demonstrate that they continue to meet the standards, rather than stipulating how much CPD should be undertaken over a two-year period.

Where the HPC differs from the GSCC, however, is in the detailed 'threshold standards' as set out in 14 separate 'standards of proficiency' for each of the regulated professions. Although the standards are not unlike the GSCC's current codes of conduct, they go into more detail about core competencies for each of the regulated professions. The HPC says:

'... the standards of proficiency describe what you must know, understand and be able to do at the time you join our Register ... when you apply for or renew your registration, or if concerns are raised about your competence while you are registered with us ...'

Judged

The standards of proficiency for social workers document went out to consultation ahead of a closing date for responding of Friday 18 November 2011. The standards of proficiency (and other HPC guidance) will form the benchmark upon which a social worker's practice will be judged when concerns are raised about her or his fitness to practise. It really is all change in the regulation of the social work profession as, at the same time the standards of proficiency went out for consultation, the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) has formulated a framework of overarching standards, the Professional Capabilities Framework, which is intended to inform and support social workers throughout the lifetime of their professional careers. These standards include professionalism, diversity and leadership – and they are demanding.

For instance, under the 'justice' heading social workers are expected to advance human rights and promote social justice. The HPC and SWRB have recently issued a joint statement about how these two sets of regulatory standards should interact. In short they confirm that HPC standards represent the minimum thresholds for social work practice and are complemented by the SWRB's lifelong standards. This does not mean, of course, that the HPC will not be informed by what the SWRB considers to be

THE HCPC, AS IT WILL BE KNOWN, MAY SEEM LIKE ANOTHER NEW ACRONYM TO REMEMBER, BUT THIS IS A LOT MORE THAN SIMPLY A REBRANDING EXERCISE

best practice, and it will be interesting to see how things develop as the HPC gets to grips with the business of regulating social workers and making decisions about their fitness to practise based on adherence to these newly-formulated criteria.

In terms of managing the transition from the GSCC to the HPC, there is nothing immediate for social workers to do. The annual registration fee is likely to increase from £30 to £76, which will incite some debate nearer the time, as well as the fact that the student register may be voluntary (which may raise questions about how the HPC will enforce its standards against student social workers); but the transfer of the register itself will be an issue between the GSCC and the HPC. What social workers will need to be alert to is the HPC's general guidance on standards and, when they come into effect, the Standards of Proficiency in Social Work.

It is worth noting too that the transfer to the HPC will only affect the close to 87,000 social workers currently included on the GSCC register and not those working in the other three UK countries who will continue to be regulated in accordance with the GSCC Code of Practice.

The HPC's fitness to practise model of regulation is common to most modern regulators and, indeed, had the GSCC re-

mained in existence it seems likely that it would have adopted it. Fitness to practise means, according to the HPC, having the skills, knowledge and character to practise your profession safely and effectively. However, the concept extends beyond performance or behaviour in the workplace: the HPC may take action against a registrant for acts which may adversely affect public protection or undermine the trust and confidence the public are entitled to expect from registrants.

Fitness to practise

As with other regulators in the healthcare sector the HPC's fitness to practise processes are not designed to be punitive, rather to protect the public. It is likely, however, that in some circumstances the action taken to protect the public will inevitably have a punitive effect on the registrant.

In broad terms the HPC will consider if its intervention is necessary where concerns are raised about a registrant's misconduct, lack of competence or physical or mental health. There are other instances where they will also wish to consider if action is necessary, such as the registrant's inclusion on a barred list preventing them from working with vulnerable adults or children; or if a determination has been made against the registrant by another regulator responsible for healthcare.

Interestingly, in the context of social work there are no time limits contained within the HPC regulations, meaning that it can consider events which may have taken place a long time ago – and this particularly should be noted – even when the registrant was not on the register. Contrast this with the General Medical Council, which of course regulates doctors, whose rules stipulate that where a complaint relates to events which occurred more than five years ago, it should only proceed in exceptional circumstances.

Following receipt of a complaint the HPC will begin an investigation which it aims to complete quite swiftly (within three-six months). At the end of the investigation the registrant will be given an opportunity to comment on the allegation and the evidence underlying it. Thereafter, the matter will be considered by an Investigating Committee (made up of at least three people, including a lay person and someone from the social work profession) to decide if there is a 'case

Five key facts on the HPC

1. HPC will only assume regulatory function for social workers registered in England
2. Annual fees will rise from £30 under the GSCC to £76 under the HPC
3. CPD frameworks will be based on relevance to practise rather than hours accrued
4. A Post Qualifying Framework will be incorporated within the CPD framework developed by the SWRB
5. Developments are ongoing for an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment to support practitioners during their first year in work

16 feature regulatory changes

HPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics:

1. You must act in the best interests of service users
2. You must respect the confidentiality of service users
3. You must keep high standards of personal conduct
4. You must provide (to us and any other relevant regulators) any important information about your conduct and competence
5. You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date
6. You must act within the limits of your knowledge, skills and experience and, if necessary, refer the matter to another practitioner
7. You must communicate properly and effectively with service users and other practitioners
8. You must effectively supervise tasks that you have asked other people to carry out
9. You must get informed consent to give treatment (except in an emergency)
10. You must keep accurate records
11. You must deal fairly and safely with the risks of infection
12. You must limit your work or stop practising if your performance or judgement is affected by your health
13. You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in you or your profession
14. You must make sure that any advertising you do is accurate

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics (Health Professions Council)

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to answer'. The meeting is in private and the registrant is not permitted to attend. The test applied is known as the 'real prospect' test (as currently applied by the GSCC): the Committee must decide whether there is a real prospect of the allegation being proven at a full hearing.

It is crucial for the registrant to engage with the HPC process throughout, but most particularly at this decision-making stage. The aim of healthcare regulation generally is to ensure that the focus remains firmly on the protection of the public, but any action taken by a regulator should be the minimum necessary to achieve this and in terms of a registrant's conduct, the emphasis should be on their fitness to practise now and going forward, rather than dwelling on past perceived shortcomings – in other words current impairment of fitness to practise. With that in mind, careful thought needs to be given to whether and how the registrant should respond at this stage. For instance, if the registrant accepts their professional competence was lacking in the past but subsequent to the complaint has undertaken further training to address the issues, then the Investigating Committee needs to be aware of this (what is known as remediation) as it is bound to take this into account when deciding whether or not the case should proceed to a full hearing.

The Investigating Committee has three options available: it can request further information on a case, close it with no further action, or refer it to a full hearing by a Conduct and Competence or Health Committee. Interestingly, unlike most other healthcare regulators, the Investigating Committee does not have the power to issue a reprimand or warning – the case is either closed or it is referred. I cannot help but feel

that this is a defect in the HPC's processes, because there are cases where the registrant's conduct has fallen short but not significantly so, such that a warning would be an appropriate and proportionate response to the allegation. This may of course be something which the HPC decides to address in the future, but for now, the inability

THE INABILITY TO ISSUE A WARNING PUTS THE REGISTRANT AT INCREASED RISK OF BEING REFERRED TO A HEARING WHERE THE CONDUCT ONLY JUST MEETS THE THRESHOLD OR IS A LITTLE UNDER

to issue a warning would seem to put the registrant at increased risk of being referred to a hearing where the conduct complained about only just meets the threshold or is a little under. This means there is all the more reason to ensure whether a detailed and comprehensive response is needed at the Investigating Committee stage, and all the more reason for the registrant to engage fully with the process, in the hopes of heading off a full hearing, with its attendant worries and possible penalties.

If a case is referred to for a full hearing, the panel will decide whether the facts of the complaint are proven and, if so, whether or not this amounts to 'impaired fitness to practise'. In terms of a sanction, if impairment is found proven, this ranges from no further action, a warning about future conduct (to last between one and five years), practice conditions, suspension, or, ulti-

mately, removal from the register. Factors which will weigh in the registrant's favour include insight (which, as the HPC says, is understanding the harm which has been caused) and whether the behaviour is likely to be repeated.

All regulated professionals, at some point in our careers, face the risk that a complaint may be made against us to our regulator, and never more so than in these highly-regulated times in which public awareness of how to complain when things go wrong has never been greater. In terms of the HPC process, I would urge all social workers to familiarise themselves with the standards of conduct which the HPC expects as it is against these they will be judged. If a complaint is made then seek advice, engage and co-operate with the regulator, and do not put your head in the sand.

Because of the HPC's emphasis on current impairment, more than ever it will be important for registrants to consider carefully whether or not to respond in detail to an allegation made. This opportunity presents itself at the Investigating Committee stage. However, every case is different, and the decision as to whether or not to respond should be taken on a case-by-case basis since admissions, once made, cannot be retracted without some difficulty and can be relied on later should the registrant find themselves at a hearing.

Finally, remember, the HPC will primarily judge you on the standard of your compe-

tence at the time it receives a complaint and not at the time of the event (whereas the GSCC, because of the formulation of their rules, have been focussed more closely on the issue of the misconduct itself rather than what efforts have been taken to remedy it). Insight and a willingness to put things right will be key as far as the HPC are going to be concerned.

PSW

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To comment on this article or on the wider implications of the change of regulator, email editor@basw.co.uk

Social workers urged to sign e-petition against having to pay twice to register

BASW is urging all social workers to sign an e-petition aimed at preventing social workers having to pay their registrations fees twice next year as fears emerged that some practitioners in England will pay money to both the General Social Care Council and its successor body the Health Professions Council (HPC).

Social workers can add their name to the campaign which emerged after HPC and GSCC leaders admitted some of those renewing before July 2012, when the GSCC ceases to exist, will need to pay both the current regulator and the incoming HPC. The fees for the GSCC registration are £30 a year, which some practitioners will have to pay in addition to the higher £76 a year HPC fees when it assumes the regulatory role.

BASW England manager Ruth Cartwright said: "At this time when many social workers are under financial pressure with high inflation, no pay increase or even salary cuts, and erosion of car allowances, it is harsh that the cost of our registration is more than doubled. It adds insult to injury that many of us will be expected to pay both GSCC and



HPC in the same year. It smacks rather of 'computer says no' and we aim to take this issue up with the HPC and DH."

Separately, BASW raised concerns last month that the HPC's new proposed proficiency standards for social workers would place unreasonable expectations on newly-qualified social workers. Under Standard 4.0 of the draft guidance published for consultation, practitioners would be expected to 'be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their

own professional judgment' in order to be registered by the regulator.

But in its submission to the consultation, BASW's Learning and Development Group warns that new social workers would need lengthy support to meet the standard. 'No decent employer would or should expose a newly registered social worker to the degree of autonomy implied in standard 4.0,' it states.

To sign the e-petition visit:
www.basw.co.uk/petitions

Concern at HPC plans for voluntary student list

The Health Professions Council (HPC) has launched a consultation on whether it should keep a voluntary register for social work students. The regulator, which will take over regulation of social work from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) in July 2012, has no powers to compel students to register but, under the Health and Social Care Bill, could maintain a voluntary student register.

Students would face a hike in the annual £10 a year registration fee charged by the GSCC because the HPC does not receive financial support from the government. Professionals registered by the HPC pay £76 a year but it not clear whether students will be expected to pay the same fee. BASW policy officer Joe Godden expressed concern at the voluntary proposal. "The idea of voluntary registration is, on the face of it, attractive, but I think in reality the vast majority of employers taking students

on placement would want to be assured and ask that students are registered – in effect, making it compulsory."

Mr Godden said students in second or final year placements are given more autonomy than first years and are far more likely to be working in isolation and with very vulnerable people at times of considerable crisis. "Good universities go to considerable lengths to do their own checks prior to entry on courses and universities have a considerable role in monitoring and supporting students on placements," he added.

The GSCC has 15,000 students on its register and heard eight cases between 2010-2011 concerning students' conduct, 5% of the total number of conduct hearings over that period.

See The Trainee, page 23, for one student's difficult experience of a work placement

Fewer Welsh students face regulator

The number of social work students referred to the social care regulator in Wales has fallen by more than a third in two years. A report by the Care Council for Wales, Raising Standards in Social Care, says the number of referrals by higher education institutions has dropped from 26 in 2008/2009 to 10 in 2010/2011.

It adds that the drop may be attributed to universities improving their application assessment procedures, which in turn is resulting in fewer students on courses who are not suitable for a career in social work.

BASW Cymru manager Robin Moulster welcomed the report as an indication "that the quality of social work students appears to have increased".

You are in: News

Should you join The College of Social Work?

Mithran Samuel

Thursday 12 January 2012 14:26

THE COLLEGE OF SOCIALWORK

Last week's launch of The College of Social Work has posed each of England's approximately 85,000 social workers with a simple question: to join or not to join? Check out our comparison table to help you decide.

The economic downturn is squeezing living standards, social worker registration fees are to double from £30 to about £60 for basic rate taxpayers this year, as the non-subsidised Health Professions Council succeeds the government-funded General Social Care Council. And The College is an unknown quantity.

Moreover, many thousands of social workers already pay hundreds of pounds a year in membership fees to a professional association, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), a trade union, such as Unison, or both. To complicate matters further, BASW launched its own trade union, The Social Workers Union (SWU), last year, with membership at no extra cost.

So how tempting will the College's offer be of £60 membership for employed practitioners and £90 for independent social workers?

Low-cost option

The College has deliberately styled itself as a low-cost option with a view to rapidly building membership. Its target is to sign up 6,000 people by April – when membership fees kick in with the removal of its government subsidy – and “many more” by the end of the year.

It is also actively encouraging people to combine College membership with membership of BASW or a union, to obtain advice and representation services.

Unlike BASW/SWU or Unison, The College offers no representation at conduct hearings, in workplace grievance or disciplinary cases or employment tribunals. Unlike Unison across the country, and the SWU, in a few local authorities, The College will not be party to negotiations over pay and conditions for council staff.

What you do get for your money is two things: a series of professional support and advice services, geared towards helping social workers enhance their practice and meet standards; and a “voice” for the profession and a say, for members, in shaping it.

The former include face-to-face mentoring, an online professional helpdesk, and, from June 2012, an online portfolio where practitioners can record their continuing professional development, linked to registration requirements.

Practitioners can also be insured against claims by clients for negligence or mistakes (professional indemnity insurance) or, in the case of independent social workers, for injury or damage to property (public liability insurance).

The College's planned joint membership deal with Unison – now on hold after BASW and MPs raised concerns about the union securing a “closed shop” – reflects the lack of overlap between the functions of the two organisations (see table).

Something distinct?

However, The College's array of professional support services is matched by BASW, while in some respects, BASW's offer is currently more extensive, notably its wide range of social work news, practice and research publications, as compared with The College's monthly digital magazine, and its network of full-time professional officers.

However, The College believes it has something distinctive to offer practitioners – namely an opportunity, through membership, to influence the development of the standards that govern the profession.

It has inherited responsibility for the professional capabilities framework (PCF) from the Social Work Reform Board and will be responsible for further developing it.

“The PCF sets out the profession's expectations of social workers at every stage of their careers and provides professional standards which are recognised by employers and endorsed by the sector through the reform board,” says a spokesperson.

Since 1975, BASW has had its own code of ethics, setting standards for members, which chief executive Hilton Dawson says is the “seminal document for social workers”, reflecting “international standards”.

However, the PCF will carry currency with employers, which The College sees as its crucial selling point.

But Dawson sees the PCF itself as a more collaborative project. “We are working with the College on those sorts of issues,” he says. “It's a bit much for them to claim ownership of the work which has been contributed to by many associations including Unison and BASW.”

Democracy

Practitioners' ability to influence the PCF standards is also dependent on the internal democratic mechanisms of the College.

The College's £5m start-up funding from government, the fact that its current transitional board is appointed and its strong endorsement by employers have led some to see it as an establishment creature.

However, The College insists it will be “member-led”. Its current appointed board will be replaced by an elected one in the spring, while the College says that an elected professional assembly will “steer the professional

leadership function", including the PCF.

And despite being an arch critic of much that the College has done, Dawson wrote in a blog last month that it should provide a "democratic opportunity"; so much so, that he has joined himself.

Independent social workers

One group for whom the College may prove an attractive option are independent social workers. Their £90 membership fee includes £5m in public liability insurance to cover claims for injury or damage to property from members of the public that they come into contact with.

BASW, which has a significant level of Independent membership, provides the same service optionally at an additional cost of £120 for independent members.

However, Dawson is clear that he does not see The College as a competitor for membership.

"I don't see The College as an alternative to BASW," he says, saying that the majority of people join BASW for its advice and representation service. "For a price of a bar of chocolate a day I think [BASW membership is] the best deal in town and I strongly recommend that to social workers. I know times are tough but social workers need to protect themselves."

Sustainability

The relatively low cost of College membership has already provoked questions on Community Care's CareSpace forum about the sustainability of its services, particularly given that it is currently based at the Social Care Institute for Excellence's offices on Pall Mall.

However, a College spokesperson says: "There has been considerable speculation about how many staff the College will employ, and about its office and board costs, none of which is realistic."

He points out that its fixed costs are relatively low: most of its services are online, meaning "the costs of services for thousands of members is the same for one", and their development and testing have been funded by its start-up costs; all staff are on short-term contracts and none is employed beyond August; and no decision has been taken about the College's office location.

Over the next three months, it will become clear how far social workers consider that The College offers value for money and evidence may emerge of whether membership levels at other organisations have been hit.

"It's a decision for social workers to take," says Dawson. "It's a matter of choice."

Over the longer-term, the nature of the choice may change. The planned Unison-College is deal still under consideration as is, despite months of acrimony, a College-BASW merger.

"There's work going on at the moment," says Dawson. "I just hope that we can join together with the College."

More information

The College of Social Work. BASW and Unison: The costs and benefits for social workers in 2012



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PLUS: Tributes to 'role model' Sebastian p3 Hospital staff parking anger p7

■ Government plans inflict blow on town

170 jobs to be cut

BY LUCIE GREEN

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GOVERNMENT cuts have led to the loss of 170 jobs at an office block in Rugby.

Staff at the General Social Care Council, based at Myson House in Railway Terrace, have been told by the Government their organisation will be scrapped later this year.

Jenna Khalfan, head of communications, said: "We are being abolished and 170 jobs will be lost in Rugby.

"People are working on admirably. Work is still being done and because of the nature of what it does - it's a regulator - it can't wind down until the very end."

The offices are expected to close down on July 31.

The Government is transferring the functions of the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council. It will be renamed the Health & Care Professions Council and will be based in London.

After hearing the news Rugby MP Mark Pawsey held separate meetings

with management and staff in Rugby.

"I raised the matter in the House of Commons in a debate on June 9 last year and also wrote to the minister."

In his reply, Paul Burstow, Minister of State for Care Services, set out the Government case that the level of funding for the GSCC of between £21 million and £25 million a year for the quango was not considered sustainable.

Mr Pawsey said: "He said that the new system of regulation of social workers will lead to greater scrutiny and a more comprehensive system.

"It is of great concern to me that the consequence of these changes will be redundancies among a highly committed Rugby workforce and I know that the management team have been working hard to support those who will be affected."

Workers at Unite, the largest

union in the country, said they were not consulted by the coalition government or the GSCC board prior to the announcement in 2010.

Unite regional officer Colenzo Jarrett-Thorp, said: "This is a devastating blow to the staff at the GSCC after working so hard in putting social work regulation on the map for the first time - only then to hear that the reward for their endeavour is dismissal."

Your view

Will you be affected by the GSCC's closure?

■ Write to The Editor, 2 Albert Street, Rugby, CV21 2RS

■ email editorial@rugbyadvertiser.co.uk

■ Tweet: @rugbyadv



Appendix 2 - Examples of social work parliamentary activity

7 November 2011

Health and social care bill Lords debate - transfer of social work regulation

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My Lords, this has been an interesting series of amendments. The noble Lord, Lord Patel made a very important point about the influence that legislators can have in drafting legislation on the culture of the NHS. He speaks with great experience because of his work in Scotland on the development of clinical standards, and I am sure he is right to emphasise the words "health" and "clinical" in adding to our understanding of what we seek from the National Health Service.

The point raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Barker, is very interesting. This is meant to be a health and social care Bill, although there is very little about social care in it. Indeed, the only provisions ranging around social care are bad provisions. Remarkably, we are proposing to abolish the General Social Care Council, which ought to be an uplifter of standards among social workers. I give notice that I intend to thoroughly oppose these provisions and place the regulation of social workers into a health body. I look forward to the support of the noble Baroness, Lady Barker, on that when we come to it. I would have thought that the way through is either to add well-being to this part of the Bill or to say "health, clinical and other outcomes" to meet the valid point raised by noble Baroness.

2 February 2011

Business questions - Location of government departments and regulatory bodies

Question: Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): Following an announcement made some 18 months ago, 170 of my constituents are to be made redundant later this year as a consequence of the decision to transfer the functions of the General Social Care Council, based in Rugby, to the Health Professions Council, based in London. Given that office accommodation costs and the cost of employing people are lower in the regions than in the capital, may we have a debate about the Government's strategy for the location of Departments and regulatory bodies?

Answer: Sir George Young: My hon. Friend raises a serious issue, and I was sorry to hear about the loss of jobs in his constituency. Of course I will raise the matter with the appropriate Minister. As my hon. Friend will know, the Government have had to take some difficult decisions on public sector manpower that involve some rationalisation, but I will certainly see that his point about the relative costs in the regions are taken on board as we come to make these difficult decisions.

Appendix 3 - Frequently asked questions on the transfer of regulatory functions from the General Social Care Council to the Health Professions Council

Taken from HPC website on 25 January 2012

These frequently asked questions (FAQs) address some questions on the transfer of regulation of social workers in England from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to the Health Professions Council (HPC).

The FAQs will be kept under review and will be updated as appropriate. If you have any questions in the meantime please contact the Policy and Standards Department on 0207 840 9815 or email policy@hpc-uk.org

The GSCC has also produced some FAQs about the transfer which can be found on their website [here](#).

- About the HPC and the transfer
- Information for social workers
- Information for employers and service users
- Information for students and education providers
- HPC registration renewal and fees for social workers in England

About the HPC and the transfer

Why are you undertaking work on regulating social workers in England?

Last year, the Department of Health published 'Liberating the NHS: Report of the arm's-length bodies review'. That report said that the government intended to transfer the regulation of social workers in England to the Health Professions Council. Since then, the government has published the Health and Social Care Bill, which includes provisions for the transfer of regulation from the GSCC to the HPC. The Health and Social Care Bill is currently before Parliament.

We are therefore making preparations in advance of the transfer of regulatory functions from the GSCC to ourselves. This will include work on amending our Register to incorporate social workers, developing communications strategies about this work and setting the standards which social workers in England must meet once they are registered by us.

When is the register likely to transfer?

We anticipate that the register will transfer in July 2012. However, this date is subject to legislative approval and may therefore change. In the meantime, anyone working as a social worker in England must remain registered with the GSCC.

Are you going to change your name?

The arm's length bodies review said that our name will be changed to reflect our new role of regulating social workers in England. The Health and Social Care Bill says that, subject to parliamentary approval, our new name will be the Health and Care Professions Council.

Do you only work to a 'health model'?

We do not prescribe the model or theoretical approach that people must work to. The professions we currently regulate do not all work to a 'health model' or consider themselves to be 'medical modalities'. For example, occupational therapists and art therapists have been successfully regulated by us since 2003 and these professions do not work to a 'medical model'.

We set broad, enabling standards for safe and effective practice and recognise that registrants might meet these in a variety of different ways, depending upon, for example, their professional background or personal preference.

How can I be kept up to date with developments?

We are working in partnership with the GSCC to develop a communications strategy to provide information to social workers, their employers and service users before the transfer.

We will be publishing more information on our website in the run up to the transfer from the GSCC. We also intend to update these FAQs on a regular basis. In addition, you can sign up to our newsletter HPC In Focus, which will keep you updated with important information. To sign up email newsletter@hpc-uk.org.

What will happen to my data in advance of the HPC opening the Register for social workers in England?

Ahead of the transfer of the GSCC's regulatory functions to the Health Professions Council (HPC) the GSCC will begin securely sharing information with the HPC about the Social Care Register and its registrants.

The HPC needs this information before the GSCC closes so that we can be fully prepared to open the register on the day of transfer.

Both the GSCC and the HPC take the security and confidentiality of registrant's data very seriously. All information will be shared safely and securely and electronic information will be encrypted to the recommended industry standards.

Information for social workers

What does the transfer mean for social workers in England?

The transfer will only affect social workers in England. When it happens, we will take responsibility for regulating social workers in England. We will set standards which social workers have to meet, approve the education programmes they need

to complete to enter the Register and ensure that social workers meet the standards we have set.

Social workers will not need to complete paperwork to transfer from the GSCC to us as the transfer will happen automatically.

Does the transfer affect social workers in the rest of the UK?

We will only take over responsibility for regulating social workers in England from the GSCC. The transfer does not affect social workers who are regulated by the other UK social work regulators. You will only need to register with us if you want to work in England. We are working with the other social work regulators in the UK to ensure that individuals who successfully completed approved training elsewhere in the UK are able to register and practise in England.

Will I still need to complete my PRTL?

Social workers in England must meet the GSCC's post registration training and learning (PRTL) requirements in order to maintain their GSCC registration. If you want to work as a social worker in England you must continue to meet these requirements until the transfer takes place.

Once the regulation of social workers in England transfers to us, you will need to meet our requirements for continuing professional development (CPD). In summary, you must undertake CPD which is relevant to your role and which brings benefits to your practice and to your service users. We do not set a number of hours of CPD which you must complete and we define CPD activities as any activity from which you learn or develop. You can find more information about our CPD processes, including on-line resources, [here](#).

What will happen to the post-qualifying framework?

The HPC will not assume responsibility for the post-qualifying (PQ) framework currently published and maintained by the GSCC. However, we anticipate that these arrangements will become incorporated within the CPD framework being developed by the Social Work Reform Board and that this will be owned by the College of Social Work. Professional bodies like the College of Social Work have an important role to play in supporting and developing the professions they represent.

We do not anticipate that this change will have any detrimental impact upon the availability or the quality of post qualifying education and training available for social workers. This is because social workers in England will need to undertake CPD to remain registered with us and their CPD could include this post qualifying education and training.

The Social Work Reform Board is working to develop and reform the social work profession. What is the HPC's role in these reforms and how will it take them forwards?

The HPC is a member of the Social Work Reform Board ([SWRB](#)). We are committed to working alongside the social work community to raise standards and achieve the vision of a safe, confident future for social work.

Many of the reforms proposed by the SWRB will be taken forward by the College of Social Work. However, we firmly believe that our standards and processes will help to support and deliver the reforms proposed by the SWRB.

We have produced a joint statement with the Social Work Reform Board about the role of the standards of proficiency and the Professional Capabilities Framework. Click [here](#) to read the statement.

What is happening about the assessed and supported year in employment?

One of the reforms of social work being taken forwards by the SWRB is the development of an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). The purpose of the ASYE is to support social workers in their first year in their profession to ensure that they are practising safely and effectively. The SWRB is currently exploring different mechanisms for delivering the ASYE, including the link between successful completion of the ASYE and registration.

We recognise the value of preceptorship, induction and support, particularly for individuals who are just entering their profession after completing their training. We are a member of the SWRB and will continue to contribute to discussions and plans to reform social work.

Skills for Care is working in partnership with the Children's Workforce Development Council to develop the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) which is due to be implemented from September 2012. Regular briefings and communications will be made available about its development and implementation and these will be particularly relevant to employers, operational social work staff as well as workforce development colleagues and those working in social work education. For further information about the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment and a downloadable version of the initial briefing please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/asye

What are standards of proficiency?

The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards for safe and effective practice in each of the professions we regulate. They play a crucial role in how someone becomes and remains registered. The standards outline what an individual must know, understand and be able to do when they enter the Register and begin practising their profession. You can find more information about standards of proficiency on our website [here](#).

We have drafted the standards of proficiency for social workers and will be consulting on them between mid-July and mid-November 2011. We set up a working group to draft these standards, which included members of our Council and representatives from key stakeholders in the field of social work in England. There is more information about this on our website [here](#).

How will you assess applications from social workers qualified overseas?

Applicants from overseas who want to apply before the Register transfers should apply to the GSCC. Applicants who qualified overseas and want to work within England after the Register transfers must apply through our international registration process.

Applications from social workers who have qualified overseas are assessed against the standards of proficiency that we will set for social workers in England. The standards of proficiency are the standards necessary for safe and effective practice as a social worker.

Applicants must show that they meet the standards through a combination of their training and experience.

Applications would be assessed by two social workers. There is more information on the international process on our website [here](#).

How will you look at concerns raised about a social worker's practice?

When we look at concerns raised about registrants, including social workers, we use a 'fitness to practise model'. Under the fitness to practise model, we consider whether someone's ability to practise safely and effectively is impaired because of misconduct, a lack of competence, or their health. We appoint panels to look at concerns raised about registrants. A panel which looks at a concern about a social worker would always include at least one social worker as well as a lay person.

The GSCC currently considers complaints against social workers in England using a 'conduct model'. A conduct model focuses on whether the registrant's behaviour or actions were a breach of the code of conduct and as a result whether a sanction should be imposed.

There are therefore several differences between the 'conduct model' and one based on 'fitness to practise'. For example, we will be able to consider concerns which arise about a social worker's competence. In addition, when we decide whether a social worker's fitness to practise is impaired, we look at the current situation and make a decision about whether we need to take action. The process is not designed to punish registrants for past mistakes but to protect the public from those who are not fit to practise. If it is found that a registrant's fitness to practise is impaired then a sanction can be imposed.

There is more information about our fitness to practise process on our [website](#).

How much will the registration fee be?

The HPC is an independent regulator and unlike the GSCC, receives no subsidy from the Government. Its current annual registration fee is £76, one of the lowest fees across all of the UK health and social care regulators. The annual fee has remained the same for over three years and the Council recently announced there would be no increase this year.

The GSCC's current annual registration fee is £30 and is subsidised by Government. Had the GSCC remained it would have moved towards financial and managerial independence. Estimates by the Department of Health at the time of the announcement indicated that the fee would have needed to increase from £30

to in the region of £200 to achieve independence. However, the GSCC would have worked to reduce this and bring the cost in-line with other regulators.

Information for employers and service users

What does the transfer mean for employers?

Once the Register for social workers opens, employers should check that their social worker is registered with us. Where employers have concerns about the conduct or competence of a social worker they employ, they can tell us so that we can take appropriate action.

We run 'Employer Events' which are events aimed specifically at employers. We will be holding employer events for social work employers just before the transfer of regulation takes place. Details of these events will be available on our website [here](#) and we will also be writing to all employers before the transfer to provide further information.

What does the transfer mean for service users?

Once the Register for social workers opens, service users should check that their social worker is registered with us. Service users can then be confident that their social worker is genuine and meets nationally agreed standards.

We will be working with a variety of stakeholder groups representing service users to provide information about the transfer in a timely manner.

Information for students and education providers

What does the transfer mean for students?

We anticipate that all social work degree programmes which are approved by the General Social Care Council on the day of transfer will be granted open ended approval by us. This means that any student who has recently completed, or who is due to shortly complete one of these programmes will be eligible to apply for registration with us.

Before the transfer takes place, we will write to education providers giving them information about the HPC. In addition, we have developed on-line resources specifically for students which can be found on our website [here](#).

We do not currently register students. We are currently in [consultation about student fitness to practise and registration](#) which will help us to decide whether we will continue to maintain the register of social work students in England currently maintained by the GSCC.

Will you be involved in distributing practice placement funding to social work education providers?

No. The transfer of regulatory functions from the GSCC will not include this area of work. As an independent statutory regulator, we do not play a role in the funding or

commissioning of programmes. Currently it is anticipated that this GSCC function will transfer to the professional body for social workers, the College of Social Work.

What new standards will social work programmes have to meet?

In order to be approved by the HPC, all social work programmes will need to meet their [standards of education and training](#), which in turn ensure that individuals who successfully complete these programmes meet their [standards of proficiency](#) and have an understanding of their [standards of conduct, performance and ethics](#). The HPC will not use the Department of Health requirements for social work training, the GSCC's codes of practice in their approval process or the Social Work Reform Board's professional capabilities framework now owned by College of Social Work. Education providers will need to ensure that their programmes reflect the curriculum guidance for their profession. Curriculum guidance could include existing standards such as the QAA subject benchmarks statements as well as the professional capabilities framework and education recommendations from the Social Work Reform Board and College of Social Work.

Which programmes will the HPC approve?

The HPC anticipate approving all social work programmes and all approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes that are approved by the GSCC on the day of transfer. The HPC also anticipate recognising the historic approval of a number of social work and approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes which no longer run, but still provide eligibility to register as a social worker, or eligibility to be appointed as an AMHP. The HPC do not anticipate approving any other post registration programmes for social workers.

When will the HPC begin approving social work degree programmes, and how?

The HPC anticipate granting open ended approval to all social work programmes which are approved by the GSCC on the day of transfer. This means that any student who has recently completed, or who is due to shortly complete one of these programmes will be eligible to apply for registration with the HPC. This is important as many students will be completing their programmes and seeking registration around the time of the transfer. It is then anticipated that all approved programmes will be subject to an approval visit by the HPC to assess that they meet their standards. It is likely that these visits will take place over a number of academic years, with those education providers scheduled towards the end of the period being required to engage with an interim form of annual monitoring. Further information will be available nearer to the date of transfer. Once programmes have had their approval reconfirmed, they will be subject to the HPC's standard monitoring processes.

Who will make the decisions on programme approval for the HPC?

The HPC's Education and Training Committee has statutory responsibility for approving and monitoring education programmes leading to eligibility to apply to register with them. 'Visitors' will be appointed by the HPC to visit education providers and assess monitoring submissions offering social work education. These 'Visitors' will predominantly be social workers, coming from a range of

backgrounds including higher education and service. Social worker visitors will work as partners of the HPC (and not employees) and provide the expertise the HPC's Education and Training Committee need for their decision-making. Visitors normally operate in panels of two or three, rather than individually. All Visitors will be selected with due regard to their education and training experience (academic and practice). Visitors will represent the HPC and no other body when they undertake an approval and monitoring exercise to ensure an entirely independent outcome.

Can changes to existing social worker programmes, for implementation in September 2012, get HPC approval?

The HPC will not be able to approve any changes to existing social worker programmes until after the transfer of regulatory functions from the GSCC. As it is currently anticipated that this will be no earlier than July 2012, education providers should work with the GSCC during the 2011-12 academic year to gain approval for any changes to existing social worker programmes. It is anticipated that there will be a small number of programmes which are part way through the GSCC quality assurance processes at the time of transfer. The HPC and GSCC will work together to share information and ensure that the transfer of regulatory functions does not disadvantage or delay decision-making unreasonably. Further and more detailed information will be available nearer to the date of transfer.

How can new social worker programmes that start in September 2012 get HPC approval?

The HPC will not be able to approve any social worker programmes until after the transfer of regulatory functions from the GSCC. As it is currently anticipated that this will be in July 2012, education providers should work with the GSCC during the 2011-12 academic year to gain approval for any new social worker programmes. In preparation for the regulatory transfer, the HPC and GSCC will work together to share information to ensure that new programmes, due to start in the 2012-13 academic year, are not unreasonably affected by the regulatory transfer. Further and more detailed information will be available nearer to the date of transfer.

Will all academic staff working on social work degree programmes have to be on the HPC register?

Anyone who wishes to use the protected title 'social worker' will need to be registered with the HPC, irrespective of their workplace or sector. There is no specific requirement that everyone involved with an HPC approved programme must be registered with us; however our standards of education and training (which we will assess social work degree programmes against) include broad requirements for the qualifications and experience of members on the programme team of an approved programme. More information is available in our [standards of education and training guidance document](#) (specifically in standards 3.4 – 3.6).

How can social work education providers find out more about the HPC?

Detailed information and publications are available on the dedicated education section of this website. Much of the quality assurance information and guidance is applicable to all of the HPC's existing professions, as well as social workers in

England in the future. Further and more detailed information will be available nearer to the date of transfer.

The HPC intend to hold a number of seminars specifically for social work education providers. These will help explain their standards, processes and guidance and give attendees an opportunity to ask questions. Separate seminars will also be held for social worker registrants and social worker employers. The HPC also intend to send mailings to social work education providers, providing key information and clarification on the status of their programme and future requirements for a visit. It is envisaged that both the seminars and mailings will take place in the months leading up to the transfer.

HPC registration renewal and fees for social workers in England

What will happen to my registration?

Nothing, for now. You must remain registered with the GSCC; it is illegal to use the protected title 'social worker' without registration. When the transfer happens, your registration details will be passed to the HPC, who will contact you about their registration requirements.

Do I still need to renew my registration with the GSCC?

Yes, if your registration is due to be renewed before 31 July 2012. The GSCC will write to remind you in plenty of time. You will need to complete the renewal form and return it to the GSCC with the relevant information within the time limit specified in your reminder letter. If you fail to do so you will be removed from the Register and will not be able to practise as a social worker.

Do I have to remain registered with the GSCC until the transfer?

Yes, if you are not registered it is illegal for you to practise as a social worker.

What will I have to do when the transfer to the HPC happens?

The GSCC will manage the transfer of your registration to the HPC. Following the transfer, the HPC will be in touch to formalise your registration with them. It is essential that the contact details the GSCC have for you are up-to-date.

Do social work students still need to register?

We do not currently register students. We are currently [consulting about student fitness to practise](#) which will help us to decide whether we will continue to maintain the register of social work students in England currently maintained by the GSCC.

No decision has therefore yet been taken about whether social work students will continue to register once the GSCC is abolished. We will update this page when decisions are made in this area.

I've just applied to the GSCC Register, what will happen to my registration?

Currently the GSCC is anticipated to continue to process all new applications as normal until registration is transferred to the HPC. It is important that anyone practising social work in England registers with the GSCC as it remains a legal requirement to do so.

What is the registration fee under the HPC?

The HPC's annual fee is £76.

I only pay £30 per annum with the GSCC, why is the fee increasing?

The GSCC is subsidised by government, the HPC is an independent regulator and receives no subsidy. Registration fees for all registrants who live and work in the UK are tax-deductible. This means that the £76 annual fee is reduced by 20% (for standard rate taxpayers), reducing the fee by £15.20 to £60.80. The tax deduction can be made by you requesting an amendment to your PAYE code from your tax office.

This fee is one of the lowest fees across all of the UK health and social care regulators. The annual fee has remained the same for over three years and the HPC recently announced there would be no increase this year.

What will happen after the transfer?

On 1 August 2012 all GSCC registrants will become Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registrants. This is referred to as a "Free Compulsory Transfer".

How does the registration period work?

Unlike the GSCC, where each social worker pays on an individual anniversary date determined by the date they first registered, the HCPC's registration period is two years (24 months). Subject to a public consultation and an amendment to the HPC's Rules, we anticipate this period will be 1 December 2012 to 30 November 2014.

How will I renew my HCPC registration?

HCPC will send you a paper renewal form along with codes to access their online system. This will allow you to renew either on paper or online. You will be required to complete the declaration, pay and sign by the renewal deadline.

How long do I have to renew my registration with HCPC?

Within two weeks all new social workers (England) on the HCPC Register will be invited to pay the registration fee for the two year period stated above..

Social worker registrants will then have a period of three and a half months until 30 November 2012 in which to pay the HCPC. During this period they will in effect not be paying for the cost of being on the HCPC Register.

What happens if I forget to renew by 30 November 2012?

If a social worker fails to renew their registration at the end of this period, the HCPC will take them off the Register. Details for readmission can be found here: www.hpc-uk.org/apply/readmission/

How do I pay my registration fee?

You can spread the cost of the fee by setting up a direct debit payment for £38 every six months or you can pay in a single instalment of £152 to cover the two years (£76 per annum) on the Register.

What fees can I expect to pay as a recently qualified graduate?

Newly qualified graduates registering with HCPC within two years receive a 50 per cent reduction in the fee in their first two professional years. There is a £53 scrutiny fee to process the application. This only applies to those applying to join the Register for the first time. It will not apply to those transferring from the GSCC Register.

Could social workers end up paying two sets of fees?

The HPC is conscious that some social workers may have to pay both their GSCC and HPC registration fees next year, however, the decision for the GSCC to continue to charge registration fees in 2012 ahead of the transfer is one for them and the Department of Health.