

Council, 6 December 2011

Consultation on the registration cycle for social workers in England

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The government has announced that the regulation of social workers in England will transfer from the GSCC to the Health Professions Council (HPC) subject to Parliamentary approval of the Health and Social Care Bill 2011.

We are seeking the views of stakeholders on setting the registration cycle for social workers in England as part of our preparatory work before opening the Register for the profession.

The attached paper outlines the background to the proposed regulation of social workers in England by the HPC, and outlines proposals to consult on an amendment to the Health Professions Council (Registration and Fees) Rules Order of Council 2003 in order to set the registration cycle for social workers in England.

We are suggesting that, dependent upon the passage and timing of the necessary legislation, the end date of the renewal cycle for social workers in England should be 30 November in even numbered years. We are proposing to consult on the amendment to the registration and fees rules between December 2011 and February 2012.

The regulation of social workers in England is dependent upon the legislative timetable. Therefore the timescales outlined in this paper are subject to change.

Decision

The Council is invited to discuss and agree:

- to consult on a proposal that the Health Professions Council (Registration and Fees) Rules Order of Council 2003 be amended to provide for the registration cycle for social workers in England; and
- to approve the text of the consultation document.

Background information

None

Resource implications

- Undertaking and providing input into the responses analysis.

These implications are accounted for in the Policy and Standards Department work plan for 2011/2012.

Financial implications

These implications are accounted for in the Policy and Standards Department work plan for 2011/2012.

Appendices

- HPC consultation document for proposed rules amendment

Date of paper

24 November 2011

Consultation on the registration cycle for social workers in England

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document seeks the views of stakeholders on the proposed registration cycle for social workers in England.
- 1.2 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 Health Professions Council (HPC) which, under the terms of the Bill, will be re-named the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).¹ This consultation will be of particular interest to social workers in England who will be regulated by the HPC in the future.
- 1.3 The consultation will run from **7 December 2011 to 29 February 2012**.
- 1.4 Social workers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are separately regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council, the Care Council for Wales and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council. Therefore in respect of social workers this consultation applies to England only.

2. About the Health Professions Council

- 2.1 We are a regulator and were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of professionals who meet our standards for their professional skills and behaviour. Individuals on our Register are called 'registrants'.
- 2.2 We currently regulate 15 professions:
 - Arts therapists
 - Biomedical scientists
 - Chiropodists / podiatrists
 - Clinical scientists
 - Dietitians
 - Hearing aid dispensers
 - Occupational therapists
 - Operating department practitioners
 - Orthoptists
 - Paramedics
 - Physiotherapists

¹ This paper refers to the 'HPC' throughout, rather than the 'Health and Care Professions Council' for consistency and clarity.

- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Speech and language therapists

3. About the regulation of social workers in England

- 3.1 Social workers in England are currently regulated by the GSCC. The GSCC maintains the statutory register of social workers in England and also operates a voluntary register social work students in England. It issues and enforces a code of practice for social workers and approves social work education programmes.
- 3.2 Last year, the Department of Health published ‘Liberating the NHS: Report of the arm’s length bodies review’. The report said that the regulation of social workers in England would move from the GSCC to the HPC.²
- 3.3 Subject to Parliamentary approval of the Bill, the GSCC register for social workers in England is expected to transfer to the HPC on 31 July 2012.
- 3.4 Please note that the GSCC will continue to be responsible for registering social workers and social work students in England until such time as the necessary legislation has been approved by Parliament and comes into force.

4. About this consultation

- 4.1 We are seeking the views of stakeholders on setting the registration cycle for social workers in England as part of our preparatory work before opening the Register for the profession.
- 4.2 Currently social workers registered with the GSCC renew their registration in three yearly cycles, on the anniversary of when they first applied for registration. This means that each social worker on the GSCC register has a date relevant to their own registration by which they need to renew their registration.
- 4.3 When the HPC Register for social workers in England opens, there will be a one-off transfer of the register for the profession from the GSCC. We will then write to all those who have transferred to welcome them to the HPC and to ask them to renew their registration and pay the relevant registration fee.
- 4.4 Unlike the GSCC, each profession registered with the HPC renews its registration in two yearly cycles. When a profession is due to renew its registration, we send each registrant in that profession a renewal form and ask that they sign the form and return it to us with payment of the registration fee or a direct debit authorisation. Alternatively, they may renew their registration online by the profession’s registration end date. If we fail to receive a completed form or online renewal and payment by the registration end date, the registrant’s registration will lapse.

² Review of Arm's Length Bodies – update, Department of Health press release, 18 October 2011, <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2011/10/review-of-arms-length-bodies-update/>.

- 4.5 The registration cycles for each of the professions are set out in our statutory rules.³ For example, the registration end date for occupational therapists is 31 October in odd numbered years. This means that the current two-year registration period for occupational therapists runs from 1 November 2011 to 31 October 2013, and that when occupational therapists are asked to next renew their registration, they must renew by 31 October 2013. The profession's next renewal date after that would be 31 October 2015.
- 4.6 In order to set the registration cycle for social workers in England, the relevant date for the profession's renewal cycle needs to be added to our rules.

5. Proposal for consultation

- 5.1 We are proposing that the registration cycle for social workers in England should end on 30 November in even numbered years.
- 5.2 Assuming that the GSCC register for social workers in England is transferred on 31 July 2012, this would mean that social workers in England would be required to renew their registration by 30 November 2012.
- 5.3 Social workers in England would then slot into the normal two year renewal cycle, renewing their registration for two years – 1 December 2012 to 30 November 2014. The end date for the renewal cycle for social workers in England would then continue to be 30 November in even numbered years on an ongoing basis. The renewal dates for the professions are staggered in this way so that our Registration Department is able to provide a more efficient service to those renewing their registration.

6. Summary

- 6.1 The registration cycle proposed in this document would mean the following:
- 31 July 2012 - the register of social workers in England will transfer from the GSCC and responsibility for regulating social workers will transfer to the HPC
 - August 2012 to 30 November 2012 - social workers in England invited to renew their registration
 - 1 December 2012 to 30 November 2014 - first registration cycle for social workers in England
 - that the registration cycle for social workers in England will be a two year cycle ending on 30 November in even numbered years. (i.e. the following registration cycle would end on 30 November 2016)

7. Your comments

³ Schedule 5 to the Health Professions Council (Registration and Fees) Rules Order of Council 2003

- 7.1 We would welcome your response to our consultation, and we would also appreciate your comments on any related issue. Please provide reasons alongside your answers where possible. The specific consultation question we would like your response to is:
- Do you support the proposal that the end date of the renewal cycle for social workers in England should be 30 November in even numbered years?

8. How to respond to the consultation

- 8.1 The consultation closes on **29 February 2012**.
- 8.2 We have prepared a consultation response form which you are invited to use to submit your response. You can find the consultation response form and further copies of the consultation document on our website.⁴
- 8.3 If you would like to respond to this consultation, please send your response to:
- Consultation on an amendment to the registration and fees rules
Policy and Standards Department
Health Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU
- 8.4 You may also email responses to consultation@hpc-uk.org or send a fax to +44 (0)20 7820 9684.
- 8.5 Please note that we do not normally accept responses by telephone or in person. We normally ask that consultation responses are made in writing to ensure that we can accurately record what the respondent would like to say. However, if you are unable to respond in writing please contact us on +44 (0)20 7840 9815 to discuss any reasonable adjustments which would help you to respond.

Please contact us to request a copy of this document in an alternative format, or in Welsh.

- 8.6 Once the consultation is completed, we will analyse the responses we have received. We will then publish a document which details the comments received and explains the decisions we have taken as a result. This will be available on our website.
- 8.7 If you would prefer your response not be made public, please indicate this when you respond.
- 8.8 We look forward to receiving your comments.

⁴ There is more information about how we run our consultations on our website here: www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations