

Council, 4 July 2013

Social Work Student Suitability Scheme Update

Executive summary and recommendations

### **Introduction**

The Social Work Student Suitability Scheme (England) was approved by Council at its meeting on 19 June 2012. At that meeting the Council also agreed that a report on the progress of the Scheme should be provided after one year of operation. The attached paper provides details of the number of cases, the outcomes of those cases and an overview of the general operation of the Scheme.

### **Decision**

This paper is to note. No decision is required

### **Background information**

The Council paper setting out the scheme can be found at [www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003AD8enc02-Socialworkerstudentsuitabilityscheme.pdf](http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003AD8enc02-Socialworkerstudentsuitabilityscheme.pdf)

### **Resource implications**

Cases under the Scheme are managed by a case team in the Fitness to Practise Department and general queries are dealt with by both the Fitness to Practise and Education Departments.

### **Financial implications**

None

### **Appendices**

Social Work Student Suitability Scheme Update

### **Date of paper**

21 June 2013

## Social Work Student Suitability Scheme Update

### **1. Introduction**

The Social Work Student Suitability Scheme (England) was approved by Council at its meeting on 19 June 2012. At that meeting the Council also agreed that a report on the progress of the Scheme should be provided after one year of operation. This paper provides details of the number of cases, the outcomes of those cases and an overview of the general operation of the Scheme.

The Scheme came into effect on 1 August 2012, at the time the HCPC took over the regularity functions of the General Social Care Council (GSCC). It is intended that the Scheme will operate until 31 July 2015 (unless it is revoked before that date by resolution of the Council).

The Scheme is designed to provide a transitional arrangement whilst the HCPC assess social work programmes in England against the standards of education and training. The Scheme provides a mechanism for dealing with concerns about students where this is deemed necessary, and a mechanism to deal with conduct cases concerning student that were transferred from the GSCC.

The Scheme provides for the HCPC to:

- provide an opinion, in exceptional circumstances, to a social work education provider on whether an applicant is of suitable character to be admitted to a programme;
- investigate where we consider that the education provider has failed to deal with a credible complaint about a student appropriately;
- consider the outcomes of an education provider's fitness to practise procedures to determine whether a student should be prohibited from a programme;
- maintain a record of students who are not permitted to participate in a social work programme in England; and
- manage open cases concerning individuals applying to be on the student register maintained by the GSCC and those individuals who are on the GSCC student register.

### **2. Cases**

The management of cases under the Scheme has been undertaken by a case team within the Fitness to Practise Department and general queries and questions have been dealt with in conjunction with the Education Department. Guidance and training was provided to the relevant individuals and operating guidance produced to aid in the management of cases and in dealing with queries.

## **2.1. GSCC Transfer cases**

GSCC cases concerning students that were open at the time of the transfer were managed under the Scheme, as set out in Article 5(3). Twelve open student cases were received from the GSCC and in all cases the matter has been closed without referral to an Adjudicator or opinion from an Assessment Panel. In some cases the individuals have been placed on the Net Regulate watchlist to ensure that information can be taken into account should an application be made the HCPC register in future.

A further seven cases were transferred from the GSCC where the matter had concluded and the individual struck off the student register. These individuals were added directly to the prohibited list as required under Article 9 of the Scheme. When the HCPC notified the individuals that they would be placed on the list they were provided the opportunity to ask for a review of the case, however no individual has requested such a review.

## **2.2. New cases**

Between 1 August 2012 and 31 May 2013, 16 new cases concerning student social workers were received. Of these, nine have been closed and seven remain open.

The cases received were as follows:

- two cases from education providers concerning applicants to programmes;
- four cases referred directly to the HCPC rather than to the education provider in the first instance; and
- ten education provider referrals concerning students who have been removed from programmes.

No cases have required consideration by an Assessment Panel or Adjudicator. Whilst the issues raised may have required action by the individual education provider, they are not of a nature that could require inclusion on the prohibited list.

Due to the small number of cases and because no cases have required consideration by an Assessment Panel or Adjudicator it is difficult to assess its full workings and comment on the effectiveness of these particular provisions.

## **3. Prohibited list**

There are currently seven individuals on the prohibited list, all of which were individuals previously struck off the GSCC student register. The prohibited list is published on our website at [www.hpc-uk.org/education/studentsuitability](http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/studentsuitability)

## **4. General queries**

General queries have been received by email and by phone. Depending on the nature of the query they are responded to by either the FTP case team or by the Education Department.

These queries have been relatively few in number and generally concern what should be referred to the HCPC and general questions about the Scheme. The Education Department continue to promote the availability of the scheme to social work education providers via the Education Update newsletter.

## **5. Approval of programmes**

Two education providers have now completed the approval process and had approval of their programmes confirmed. As a result the provisions of the scheme no longer apply to them. Any enquiries received regarding students from these approved programmes will now be referred back to the specific education provider to address.

The approval of programmes will continue over the next two academic years.

## **6. Next steps**

The Scheme will continue to operate and the Council will be provided with updates as follows:

- an update on the Scheme will be provided to Council in summer 2014; and
- a review of the Scheme will be undertaken after 31 July 2015 (or sooner if Council revoke the Scheme before that date).