
Professional Liaison Service – year one evaluation

Executive Summary

The Professional Liaison Service (the Service) is the HCPC's outreach service that aims, through education and influence, to empower employers, registrants and other stakeholders to create working environments and practices that enable registrants to embed and achieve high professional standards.

The prevention aims set out in our Corporate Strategy 2021-26 depend on the success of the Service, particularly our ability to enable our professions to meet our standards so they are able to adapt to changes in health and care practice delivery, preventing harm to service users.

The Service was established in May 2020 and this paper identifies what has been achieved and learnt in the Service's first year.

Council is asked to:

1. Note the achievements and learning from this first year.
2. Advise on any areas of development or focus, not identified at [What's next](#), that we should consider.
3. Advise on further stakeholders, or networks, that we might seek to build relationships and collaborate with to grow our reach and increase our impact.

Previous consideration	The Council has previously approved the Prevention and Professionalism Framework.
Decision	Council is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the achievements and learning from this first year.2. Advise on any areas of development or focus, not identified at What's next, that we should consider.3. Advise on further stakeholders, or networks, that we might seek to build relationships and collaborate with to grow our reach and increase our impact.
Next steps	Next steps are set out in the paper and at Annex A. These are dependent on budget decisions.
Strategic priority	Promote high quality professional practice: enable our professions to meet our standards so they are able to adapt to change in health and care practice delivery, preventing harm to service users.

Be visible, engaged and informed: we regulate, take and communicate decisions which are informed by a deep understanding of the environment within which our registrants, employer and education providers operate.

Financial and resource implications The next steps are dependent on approval of an anticipated 2021/22 budget of £233,207 and the resources identified in Annex A.

Author Kellie Green, Head of Professionalism and Upstream Regulation
Kellie.green@hcpc-uk.org

Sponsor Naomi Nicholson, Executive Director of Professional Practice and Insight
Naomi.nicholson@hcpc-uk.org

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Introduction

1. The Professional Liaison Service (the Service) is the HCPC's outreach service that aims, through education and influence, to empower employers, registrants and other stakeholders to create working environment and practices that enable registrants to embed and achieve high professional standards.
2. The prevention aims set out in our Corporate Strategy 2021-26 depend on the success of the Service.
3. The Service was established from scratch in May 2020, with the intention that it was developed and expanded over a three-year period (2020-2023). Learning from its first year would inform future development.
4. This paper identifies what has been achieved and learnt in the Service's first year.

Our success measures

5. Council approved the Professionalism and prevention framework in December 2020, and this identifies the success measures for our professional liaison work as:
 - we are working in collaboration with and influencing stakeholders across the UK to help to reduce harm
 - we have influenced the creation of supportive cultures and working environments within registrants' workplaces
 - our registrants understand the Standards and are able to embed and achieve them in practice
 - we see a relative change in the nature and volume of received fitness to practise concerns
6. An initial plan of work for our first year was determined in February 2020, which included a success measure of positive feedback from workshops demonstrating that delegates:
 - had improved their knowledge and understanding of the subject
 - would make a change in their practice as a result of attending
 - improved awareness of HCPC resources
 - improved their impression of the HCPC

The Service

7. The Service currently comprises:
 - Head of Professionalism and Upstream Regulation, appointed in May 2020
 - Professional Liaison Consultant (part-time), appointed in September 2020
 - Professional Liaison Officer, appointed in June 2021
8. Our plan is to expand the Service over the next two years (2021-23) by increasing the number of Professional Liaison Consultants to five.

The pandemic

9. The Service commenced in May 2020 in the midst of the pandemic.
10. Original plans had to be adapted to accommodate the pressures on our stakeholders as it was not possible, or appropriate, for us to deliver engagements and learning events within the workplace and for registrants and employers who needed to focus only on the delivery of care and response to the pandemic. For example, we moved our #MyHCPCstandards workshops online and delivered these in a webinar format. Due to pressures on employers, we only pursued a partnership with one employer and at their request rescheduled their planned workshops and events.
11. In response to the pandemic, we also led the delivery of a wellbeing campaign to support registrants, delivering tailored webinars to support registrants to meet the challenges they were facing. This included a tailored #MyHCPCstandard webinar focussing on raising concerns and scope of practice, and a webinar on remote consultations.

Risk

12. The work of the Service is a critical part of mitigating four of our six strategic risks:
 - Strategic risk 2: *the HCPC's regulatory expectations are not appropriate or not understood by registrants and other stakeholders* – our work has led to greater understanding of our role and regulatory expectations, particularly in relation to the Standards that underpin our regulatory work.
 - Strategic risk 3: *we are unable to harness the benefits of the wealth of data we hold* – the approach that we have taken to our work in this first year has been informed and shaped by intelligence and data.
 - Strategic risk 4: *we do not understand our stakeholders' needs and so are unable to be the regulator they (the wider system) need* – our engagements provide our stakeholders with the opportunity to share their concerns, information and learning with us, which we bring back to the organisation to inform our work.
 - Strategic risk 6: *we are unable to demonstrate the value of regulation due to negative experiences of our regulation in practice* – through our engagements we have been able to change the perception our stakeholders have of us.

Summary of our achievements

13. In our first year, we have established the HCPC's first outreach service. No such service previously existed. This has enabled us to:
 - partner with one employer, and influence and support their change in culture and develop our Professionalism in practice programme
 - obtain 612 subscriptions to our employer e-newsletter, publish three employer insights (e-newsletters) and create an increase in traffic to our employer hub and resources

- improve perceptions of the HCPC so that HCPC is seen as a supportive regulator
- improve knowledge of the HCPC's role and resources for more than 90% of registrants attending our webinars and workshops
- change the practice of more than 50% of registrants attending our webinars and workshops
- develop our 'Becoming a health and care professional' programme and trial this with two student groups
- increase students' knowledge of HCPC role and resources and increase their use of our online student hub
- bring intelligence and learning back to the HCPC

14. Performance against our success measures can be summarised as:

Worked collaboratively and influenced stakeholders across the UK	
Influenced the creation of supportive cultures and working environments within registrants' workplaces	
Improved registrants' understanding of the Standards	
Created a change in practice	
Improved knowledge of HCPC role	
Improved knowledge and use of HCPC resources	
Improved perception and impression of HCPC	
UK and profession wide	
Developed intelligence and learning	

Learning from our first year

15. The outreach service model that we have developed will achieve our prevention aims. We have been able to influence the creation of supportive cultures and working environments within registrants' workplaces and improved registrants' understanding of the Standards and perceptions of the HCPC. There is no evidence to suggest that we should change the approach and plans set out in the Professionalism and prevention framework and our Corporate plan 2021-22.
16. Working in collaboration with our stakeholders enables us to reach our registrants in a more efficient and effective way, as can be demonstrated by the success of our remote consultation webinar that was delivered in collaboration with the Scottish Government's lead for Near Me Network. Building strong relationships with key stakeholders is a must and will be a focus for our next year, as will seeking opportunities to work with other regulators' outreach services.
17. Our engagements provide stakeholders with the opportunity to share their concerns, information and learning with us, which can inform our work and enhance our ability to protect the public. As our engagements increase, our learning and intelligence will increase.
18. The approach that we have taken to our work in this first year has been informed and shaped by intelligence and data. Developing our ability to identify those employers, professional groups, or stakeholders that we need influence most is important if we are to remain an effective and efficient Service.
19. To achieve all identified success measures, particularly the ultimate goal of causing a relative change in the nature and volume of received fitness to practise concerns, there is a need to scale up the service and widen its reach. We currently employ one Professional Liaison Consultant and plan to increase this to five by the end of 2022/23.

Influencing employers

20. A key part of the vision for the Service was its ability to work in partnership with targeted employers, to influence and support the development of cultures, working environments and practices that enable our registrants to embed and achieve high professional standards.
21. In this first year we have partnered with one employer, an Ambulance Trust, which has been placed in special measures by the Care Quality Commission. Using this information, NHS staff survey results, and our own fitness to practise data, we identified this employer as one that we should seek to partner.
22. The Trust has welcomed our approach and we have been working collaboratively to support their change in culture. Their Director of Nursing, Clinical Quality and Improvement has recently (June 2021) provided this feedback:

[The Trust] has really appreciated your attendance at our Professional Standards Group and your input into helping us evaluate our cultural risks. This has helped ensure that professionalism for both paramedics and staff who provide clinical care alongside our paramedics are central to everything [the Trust] does and aligns with our values.

Your help with ensuring that our decisions around external referrals are fair, transparent and protect the public has particularly been appreciated. Your input has been very helpful to ensure our policies on professional registration align with the HCPC and that registrants are well supported in the Trust to undertake their role, so that patients have the best quality outcomes.

Your support with designing the clinical supervision programme we have been rolling out has been insightful as have the examples of best practice you have been able to share with us.

Your input as an HCPC representative has been invaluable in ensuring that Paramedics are supported to give good care and keep the public safe.

23. We will shortly begin delivering our 'Professionalism in practice' programme to staff within the Trust. This is a suite of evidence-based workshops and learning sets we have developed for registrants, their managers and leadership teams. It is delivered by our Professional Liaison Consultant, and draws on our learning from research, intelligence and our fitness to practise work.
24. Professionalism in practice will:
 - increase understanding of the impact of working cultures on professional practice, wellbeing and disengagement, and influence the creation of a supportive culture
 - explore what it means to be a healthcare professional, professional values and behaviours, the key influences in the work environment that allow professionalism to thrive and the impact of unprofessional behaviours
 - support and empower staff to speak up and raise concerns and achieve their duty of candour requirements
 - explore the benefits and encourage the provision of effective supervision in the workplace
 - explore when and why behaviour amongst colleagues crosses a boundary and becomes sexual, and the impact of this behaviour on colleagues and patient safety
 - develop understanding of fitness to practise and encourage greater local resolution where appropriate and improved referrals where necessary

Employer hub and e-newsletter

25. Working closely with colleagues in our Communications Team we also support and influence employers through our employer hub and e-newsletter.
26. We have achieved 612 subscriptions to the newsletter and we aim to increase this by 40% during 2021/22. We will evaluate the newsletter's use and impact in Q4 2021/22.
27. The March 2021 edition focussed on health and wellbeing and included lead articles from [North East Ambulance Service](#) and [Health for Health Professionals Wales](#). The next planned editions are:

Publication date	Theme
July 2021	Equality, diversity and inclusion
December 2021	Understanding fitness to practise
January 2022	Supporting professionalism

28. The newsletter draws employers to our [Employer hub](#), as can be seen by increase in traffic coinciding with the March 2021 edition.



29. From September 2021, we will be delivering virtual [employer events](#):
 - About the HCPC, 15 September
 - Supporting health professionals, 19 October
 - Managing concerns, 17 November

Changing perceptions

30. Though our educational workshops and events with registrants, we aim to improve the perception they have of us as their regulator.
31. We measure this by capturing the word that springs to mind when delegates think about the HCPC. We ask this at the start of an event and at the end of the event to identify whether our engagement has changed their perception of the HCPC. We want our registrants to recognise us as a supportive regulator.
32. At all of our events we have managed to shift the perception to one where the HCPC is recognised as a supportive regulator. An example is provided here, which shows the before and after wordclouds generated by registrants who attended our workshop as part of their AHP Aspiring Leaders day (West Suffolk).

Before



After



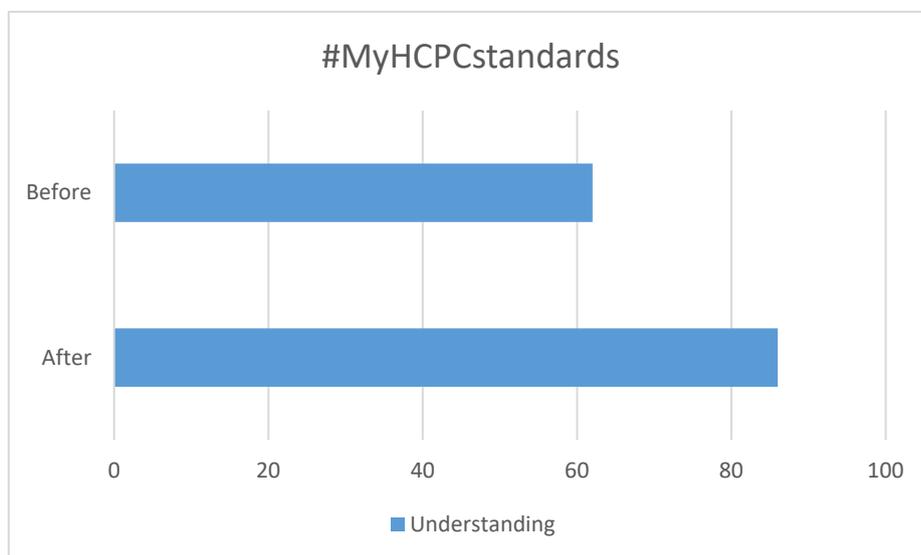
Changing practice

33. In our initial plan of work, we set ourselves the goal of achieving positive feedback from our registrant workshops demonstrating that delegates:

- had improved awareness of HCPC resources
- had improved their knowledge and understanding of the subject
- would make a change in their practice as a result of attending

34. We capture feedback at all events and in relation to this areas, we can report:

- *Has your knowledge of the HCPC's role improved?*
95% of those attending the #MyHCPCstandards said that their knowledge of the HCPC's role had improved, and from our workplace workshops an average of 99% of registrants said their knowledge had improved.
- *Has your knowledge of the resources provided by the HCPC improved?*
We draw on and promote existing HCPC resources at each learning event and 91% of those attending the #MyHCPCstandards said their knowledge of the resources provided by HCPC had improved. From our workplace workshops an average of 98% of registrants said their knowledge had improved.
- *How would you rate your understanding of the subject?*
Delegates attending the #MyHCPCstandards webinars were asked to rate their understanding of the subject on a scale of 1-10 at the start and end of each event. We saw an increase in understanding from all events and provide the overall picture from our ten #MyHCPCstandards webinars here:



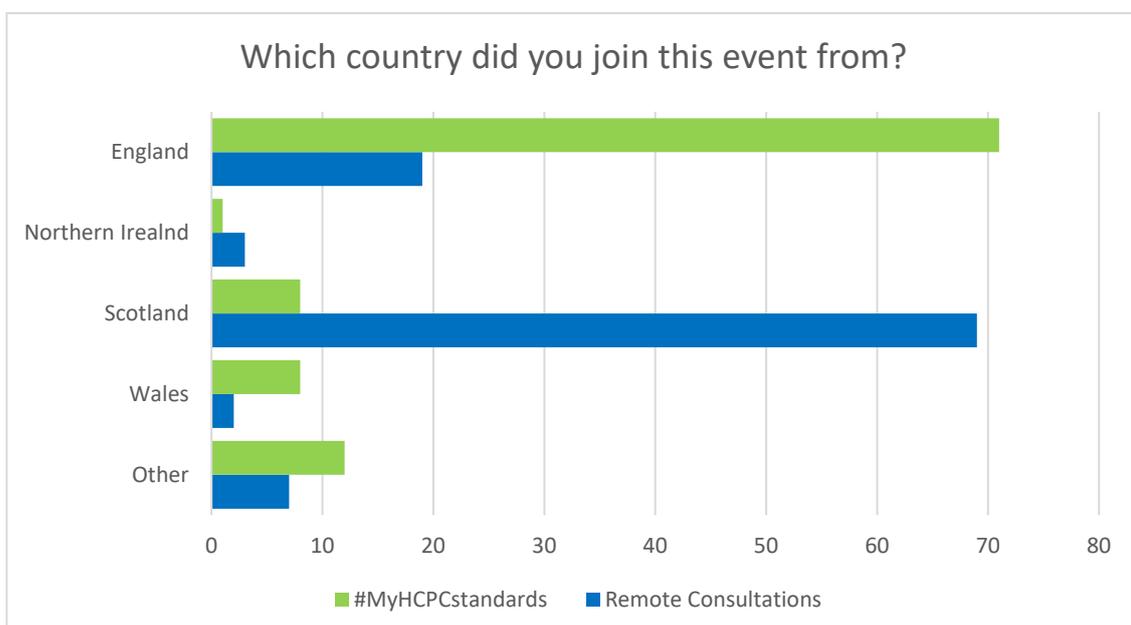
- *Will your practice change as a result of the information gained in this session?*
54% of those who attended the #MyHCPCstandards webinars said they would change their practice, and from our workplace workshops an average of 51% of registrants said they would change their practice.

- *How will your practice change?*
At our workplace workshops, we invite registrants to tell us how their practice will change and provide some quotes from those who attended the AHP Aspiring Leaders workshop (West Suffolk).



Convening power and collaboration

35. To widen our reach and influence, we have sought to collaborate with others on the delivery of our learning events.
36. In January 2021 we hosted a webinar on remote consultations with Marc Beswick, who is an Occupational Therapist and the Scottish Government’s lead for Near Me Network (remote consultation platform). Collaborating with Marc and through joint promotion of the event, we saw a significant increase in those attending from Scotland compared to the #MyHCPCstandards events. Also, 89% of those attending had not previously joined the #MyHCPCstandards, and 40% of attendees were Occupational therapists.



37. In December 2020, we presented with a representative from the British Psychological Society at their Division of Sports and Exercise Psychology Conference, enabling us to reach registrants within this profession. We have also presented #MyHCPCstandards webinars with a paramedic and physiotherapist.
38. Some professions have not yet engaged with our events and we will seek to collaborate with those professions in the coming year. This includes hearing aid dispensers, orthoptists and prosthetists/orthotists. We also plan to jointly deliver workshops with Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and a webinar with the College of Paramedics to explore fitness to practise self-referrals.

Supporting students

39. We have developed the Becoming a health and care professional programme, which supports students' learning about the HCPC, professionalism and standards.
40. This was trialled with two student groups and all of the students reported that their knowledge of the HCPC's role, standards and student resources had improved.
41. Some of the feedback from our session with first year physiotherapy students at Ulster University is provided here:

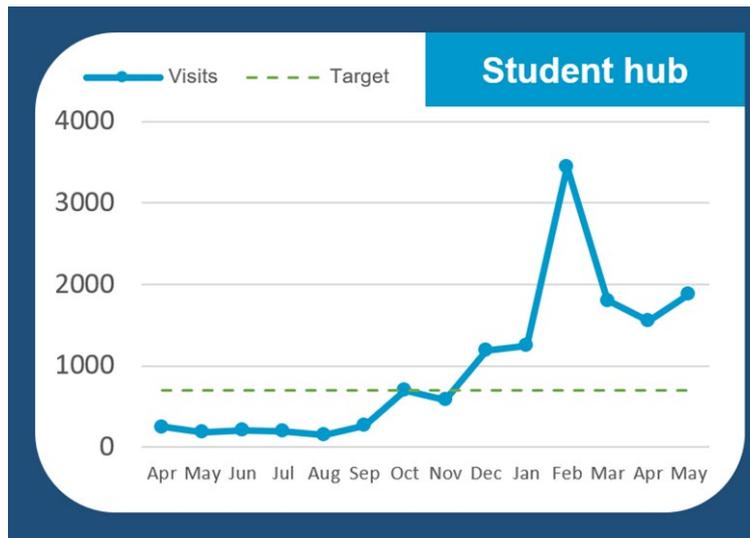
It laid out very clearly what we should and shouldn't do in some difficult social situations and provided good advice for making patients feel respected and comfortable.

Reminded me how important my behaviour and interactions with patients are

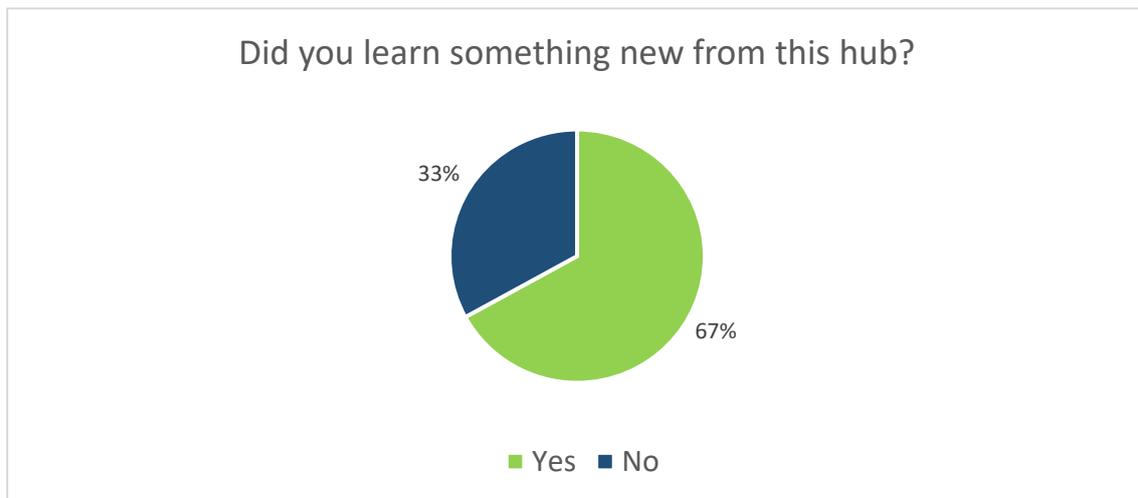
The case studies allowed us to reflect on situations we might face as health care professionals so they were really interesting

Extent of expectations of professionalism and the relevant examples. Good to get an idea that this all should start now through 1st year on placement and be carried on throughout career

42. Through these sessions, and through the promotion and social media campaign delivered by colleagues in our Communications team, we have been able to increase the traffic to our [student hub](#).



43. To help us improve the hub and make it a valued and useful resources for students, we have surveyed those using it. This shows us that we are drawing in new students (83% of those surveyed had not visited the hub before), and 100% of those completing the survey confirmed that they would visit it again.
44. Importantly, students are learning something new from the hub, as can be seen by the survey results shown here:



45. In response to the question 'what did you learn?', students have identified:

Information on health, disability and becoming a health and care professional

"I read all the HCPC guidelines for students and referenced some in my essays"

"About student CPD advice"

"Perspective of the HCPC in relation to support students"

46. The responses to the question about how the hub could be improved identified a need for more profession specific content, making it more visible on the home page and drop-down tool to improve navigation. We are considering and working on this feedback and will add to and refine the hub over the summer.

Intelligence and learning

47. Our engagements with our external stakeholders provide for us to bring back intelligence and learning that informs our work. This has included concerns about our international registration process, student fitness to practise and concerns about registrants' fitness to practise.
48. We have also shared information with other regulators through the [Emerging Concerns Protocol](#), and met with the CQC to discuss concerns about a Trust.
49. As we increase our engagements, particularly those held face-to-face, we anticipate the intelligence and learning we collect to increase. We are, therefore, in the process of developing a more formal process for the receipt and sharing of intelligence and learning.

What's next?

50. Our plans for our second year were set out in the Professionalism and prevention framework, approved by Council in December 2020. This is subject to budget decisions, and is set out in Annex A.
51. Our Corporate plan 2021-22 also provides for:
- development of the Service and extending our support and engagement for employers and registrants
 - creation of partnerships at a local and strategic levels working with stakeholders to influence cultures and working environments
52. In addition, we are developing a programme to support our international registrants as part of our EDI strategy, and supporting the delivery of our Registrant health and wellbeing strategy and action plan.

Annex A

Extract from the Professionalism and prevention action plan, approved by Council in December 2021

Professional liaison			
Corporate strategy: promote and role model high quality professional practice; be visible, engaged and informed; promoting the value of regulation			
Budget: funding for this work will be drawn from Professionalism and Upstream Regulation and Communications department budgets			
Main resources: Head of Professionalism and Upstream Regulation; x2 Professional Liaison Consultants; Professional Liaison Officer; Digital Communications Manager; Events and Communications Officer; Digital Communication Officer.			
Deliverable	Owner	Objective	Milestones
Professional Liaison Service	Professionalism and Upstream Regulation Lead	Increase our engagements with and, through education and influence, empower employers, registrants and other stakeholders to create working environments and practices that enable registrants to embed and achieve high professional standards.	Evaluation of initial year completed by Q1 2021/22 Service developed and expanded from Q2 2021/22
Partnership support for identified employers	Professionalism and Upstream Regulation Lead	Work in collaboration with identified employers to support and complement the development of supportive cultures, wellbeing and professionalism.	Work in collaboration with two identified employers from Q4 2020/21 Evaluate impact and learning Q2 2021/22 Increase partnership support provision by 65% from Q3 2021/22 Increase partnership support provision by 40% from Q1 2022/23

Employer e-news	Professionalism and Upstream Regulation Lead	Develop employers' understanding of the HCPC role, their responsibilities as an employer and the support and resources available from HCPC.	<p>Develop the e-newsletter and content plan for 2021-23 in Q3 2020/21</p> <p>Develop a promotional plan to raise awareness of employer resources and increase subscription and use by Q3 2020/21</p> <p>Promote and distribute e-newsletter throughout 2021/22 and 2022/23</p> <p>Evaluate use and impact Q4 2021/22</p>
Employer hub	Professionalism and Upstream Regulation Lead	Develop employers' understanding of the HCPC role, their responsibilities as an employer and the support and resources available from HCPC.	<p>Planning and development for future content to commence in Q3 2020/21</p> <p>Ongoing development of content from Q1 2021/22</p> <p>Evaluate use and impact Q4 2021/22</p>
Employer events programme	Professionalism and Upstream Regulation Lead	Develop employers' understanding of the HCPC role, their responsibilities as an employer and the support and resources available from HCPC.	<p>Planning and development of content to commence in Q4 2020/21</p> <p>Delivery of events to commence in Q1 2021/22.</p>
#MyHCPCstandards	Professionalism and Upstream Regulation Lead	Develop registrants' understanding of the Standards and support them to embed and achieve the Standards.	<p>Deliver a new programme of workshops from Q3 2020/21</p> <p>Evaluate impact Q4 2021/22</p>