

Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Care Professions Council held in public as follows:

Date: Thursday 21 May 2026

Time: 11am

Venue: Videoconference via Microsoft Teams

Present: Christine Elliott (Chair)
Grzegorz Drozd^{*}
Rebekah Eglinton
Helen Gough
Helen Grantham
John McEvoy
Lianne Patterson
Pameleta Ricketts
Catharine Seddon
David Stirling
Carl Stychin
Dabbi Taylor^{*}
Kathryn Thirlaway

Apologies: None

In attendance:

James Alofabi, Financial Planning and Analysis Manager
Claire Amor, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs
Claire Baker, Head of Adjudication Performance
Adrian Barrowdale, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Lead
Serena Benjamin, Business Manager for Chair and Chief Executive Office
Alastair Bridges, Executive Director of Resources
Georgia Cross, Governance Officer
Laura Coffey, Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services
Rachael Gledhill, Head of Policy and Standards (from item 4)
Emma Greening, Head of Professional Liaison and Outreach
Colette Higham, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Professional Standards Authority
Jamie Hunt, Head of Education
Cheryl Lynne-Liversage, Executive Support Officer

^{*} Council apprentice

Iain McGregor, Independent Adviser for Technology-Led Innovation
Patricia Morrissey, Head of Governance
Dave Munday, Lead Professional Officer (Regulation and Mental Health), Unite the Union
Bernie O'Reilly, Chief Executive and Registrar
Matthew Peck, Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs
Mark Rogers, Partner, Capsticks LLP
Leanne Silvestro, Head of Fitness to Practise Legal Services (until item 4)
Jodie Sommerfeld, Head of Case Progression and Quality
Andrew Smith, Executive Director of Education, Registration and Regulatory Standards and Deputy Chief Executive

DRAFT

Public meeting

1 Chair's welcome and introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Council, including a number of observers.
- 1.2 The Chair advised that the meeting would be recorded and that an artificial intelligence (AI) tool was being used to support minute taking.

1(a) Apologies for absence

- 1.3 No apologies were received.
- 1.4 The meeting was declared quorate.

1(b) Approval of agenda

- 1.5 The Council approved the agenda.

1(c) Declaration of members' interests in relation to agenda items

- 1.6 The Chair of Council declared an interest in the item relating to Council member appointments. Catherine Seddon also declared an interest in the item in relation to her consideration of applying for the Chair role. John McEvoy declared an interest in the item in relation to his consideration of applying for the Chair role and also in relation to his reappointment as a Council member and the associated process outlined in the paper.
- 1.7 The Chair advised that the Senior Council Member would chair the discussion relating to this agenda item. The Senior Council Member confirmed that no discussion or decision would advantage or disadvantage any potential candidate. It was agreed that both members who had declared an interest could remain in the meeting for the discussion, but would not take part in any decision-making.

1(d) Minutes of the Council meeting on 26 March 2026

- 1.8 The Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of its meeting held in public on 26 March 2026.
- 1.9 It was noted that the pilot use of an AI tool to support minute-taking for the public meeting of Council and its Committees had resulted in a reduction in the time taken to prepare meeting minutes.

1(e) Matters arising

- 1.10 The Council noted the update on the matters arising from previous meetings held in public and agreed that actions proposed for closure would be closed.

2 Chair's Report

- 2.1 The Council noted the Chair's report.
- 2.2 The Chair provided a further update on recent engagement with the Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) for the Scottish government. This included discussion of a recent announcement regarding the commissioning of a 'right-touch' assurance assessment of the healthcare science workforce in Scotland, which would consider whether current regulatory arrangements or employer-led assurance mechanisms were sufficient to manage the risk of harm. The Professional Standards Authority (PSA) was undertaking related work and had updated the Chair on this at a recent meeting. There was an expectation that the HCPC would be involved in further discussions.
- 2.3 The Chair of the Education and Training Committee advised the Council that the Scottish government had asked the Quality Assurance Agency to undertake a review of higher education providers in light of the recent findings of systemic risks to quality and standards at the University of Glasgow.

Performance reports

3 Chief Executive's Performance Report

- 3.1 The Chief Executive's performance report highlighted key areas of organisational performance in the reporting period since the Council's last meeting in March 2026.
- 3.2 The Council noted the report and the following points:
- Discrimination training on Islamophobia and anti-semitism had been delivered across the HCPC, including sessions for the Senior Leadership Team and all staff. The training included challenging content and reinforced the continued prevalence of discrimination within society. As a regulator the HCPC had an important role in addressing this and it was critical that the HCPC understood the impacts of discrimination for colleagues and registrants, embedding fairness and objectivity within our regulatory decision-making. The Council would undertake its discrimination awareness session in June 2026.
 - A new UK regulatory framework for AI in healthcare was being developed by the National Commission for the Regulation of AI in Healthcare. A number of engagement sessions had been held and had identified a concern regarding professional liability when using AI in

clinical practice. HCPC guidance had been issued to education providers on meeting HCPC standards as learners engaged with new technologies and Ipsos had been commissioned to undertake research into registrants' use of AI in practice. This work aimed to build an evidence base to inform the HCPC's approach and an updated would be provided to the Council in due course.

- Performance against key performance indicators (KPIs) remained strong overall; however, areas for improvement were identified in relation to:
 - KPI3 - education quality and timeliness, which had not been consistently met due to increasing complexity and capacity constraints. Despite this the quality of decision-making remained high and additional team resource had now been committed to manage the increasing complexity.
 - KPI4 - registration responsiveness, where a temporary increase in median processing times for international applications reflected the progression of older plagiarism cases. This was not expected to continue as a trend.
 - KPI 5 - customer service, while volumes closely linked to international application demand were beginning to reduce, Fitness to Practise (FTP) complaints had increased slightly, reflecting higher case volumes. The percentage of complaints upheld remained stable at 52%.
- Progress against corporate milestones was positive overall. The registrant health and wellbeing strategy and AI research work were rated amber. Following the successful appointment of a new Head of Professionalism and Upstream Regulation, the wellbeing strategy would now progress. A delivery partner had been appointed for the AI research, with work underway. All activities within the 2026–27 corporate plan tracker due to commence in Quarter 1 had been initiated.
- There had been no substantive changes to the strategic risk register (SRR) since the March Council and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings. A revised approach to the register was in development to ensure alignment with the new corporate strategy. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee would undertake detailed consideration of the new draft register at its workshop on 14 May and its meeting on 10 June. The Council would consider the new register at its meeting on 16 July 2026.

- 3.3 The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the HCPC's request to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) for a S60 Order related to interim order reviews in lieu of the planned regulatory reform. It was noted that the current review cycle was more frequent than that of other regulators and was resource intensive, with the majority of reviews resulting in no change. It was noted that reduced frequency would not increase risk, as reviews could be undertaken at any time, if required. In her response to the request, Karin

Smyth, DHSC Minister of State recognised the need to modernise the HCPC's legislation, but confirmed that a discrete legislative route was not currently considered feasible. The HCPC had discussed with the PSA the ongoing challenges associated with the HCPC's out of date legislation.

- 3.4 In response to a question regarding KPI4 - Registration responsiveness, the CEO confirmed that the measure relating to telephone calls answered applied to the Registration contact centre only and did not include calls relating to FTP. It was queried whether we should, in addition, measure responsiveness to FTP calls.

Action: The Executive Leadership Team would consider the introduction of a KPI to monitor the percentage of telephone calls answered relating specifically to FTP as part of the KPI review currently underway.

- 3.5 The Council noted that there had been an increase in FTP decisions appealed by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) to the High Court over the past year and it was suggested that a short paper should be considered by the Council on the learning points from these decisions and how the learning points have been put into practice by panels and colleagues.

- 3.6 The Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services informed the Council that there were no consistent themes to explain the increase and that it often appeared to relate to the clarity and robustness of panel decision-making, including the quality of reasoning provided and, in some instances, procedural aspects of how panels had approached their decisions. She noted that learning points were considered through the HCPC's Decision Review Group which met quarterly and included colleagues from across the organisation. She agreed to provide further detail on PSA appeals within the regular FTP report for Council's consideration.

Action: The Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services would include key themes and learning points from PSA appeals into the FTP report to Council.

- 3.7 In response to a question regarding the formulation of KPIs and the approach to triangulating risk across ARAC, the corporate plan and the corporate strategy, the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs noted that the Council would soon participate in a facilitated workshop to review its KPIs and that alignment would be achieved through the corporate plan tracker, which feeds into strategic risk updates. The revised approach was intended to simplify processes, enabling clearer identification of risks being addressed and improving organisational agility. This would support the timely movement of risks into and out of the strategic risk register (SRR) and enable appropriate responses to emerging risks. It was further noted that the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) had collective oversight of all related mechanisms, supporting a joined-up approach. Council also has visibility through its consideration of the Chief Executive's report at Council meetings, and that ARAC also maintains oversight on behalf of the Council.

- 3.8 A comment was made on the presentation of international registrations and plagiarism check, and it was suggested that the 66-day KPI, which had been

presented as red in error, should have been rated as amber based on the metric.

- 3.9 The Council discussed the consistent red rating of FTP performance, commenting that KPI data indicated a worsening position. In response, the CEO acknowledged that the HCPC had not met the PSA's standard 15 relating to case progression for 10 years and that the Chair and he had discussed the challenges with the Minister and the PSA. While legislative reform was eagerly awaited it would not be a panacea given the significant increase in FTP referrals seen across the sector. Despite these pressures, the organisation was taking forward a range of actions to address performance, including an unprecedented recruitment campaign to increase the headcount in FTP, process improvements and exploration of technology-enabled solutions.
- 3.10 The Council further noted the complexity associated with regulating multiple professions and the impact on case management performance. While some areas of timeliness remained strong, improvements in overall FTP performance were expected to require sustained effort. In addition, work was underway to clarify expectations with stakeholders, with a review of the threshold policy, governing entry into the FTP process, being brought forward to Q1.
- 3.11 The Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services clarified that the presentation of the KPI, which appeared stark due to its red rating, reflected the total number of cases concluded each month. This included a focus on progressing older cases to closure while managing the flow of newer cases to prevent backlog. It was acknowledged that this created complexity in performance reporting, particularly in demonstrating progress in clearing historic cases, and that there may be an opportunity in the KPI review to better reflect this balance. A Council member further noted that where a KPI requires significant explanation and contextualisation to be understood, this may indicate a need to review and refine the measure to ensure clarity and effectiveness.
- 3.12 The Chair noted that she had also, separately, at a Chairs' round table convened by the sector regulator, discussed FTP challenges with the PSA Chair and had suggested taking a sector-wide approach to finding potential answers and to learn from other sectors. It was acknowledged that some challenges may not have affordable answers.
- 3.13 The Council thanked the Chief Executive for the report, and it was noted that more time needed to be allocated for this item at future meetings to allow for a full discussion.

Action: The Head of Governance would allocate additional time for the Chief Executive's Performance Report on future Council meeting agendas.

4 Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Service Directorate Performance report

4.1 The Head of Fitness to Practise Legal Services, the Head of Case Progression and Quality and the Head of Adjudication Performance introduced the new format report, which provided an update on the performance and activity of the Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services (TS) directorate and set out the key improvement activity planned for 2026-27.

4.2 The Council noted the following points:

- Referral volumes had steeply increased, impacting timeliness and customer service. April saw a particularly high number of referrals, reflecting a wider trend across regulators, with engagement ongoing with the PSA and others to share learning.
- The team was adapting to increased demand through recruitment and resourcing changes, including renaming the Case Manager role to Regulatory Investigator to better reflect the responsibilities of the role.
- An assessment centre approach had been introduced to support recruitment through practical task-based evaluation, which, alongside the revised role title, would ensure that successful candidates were fit for a role in a fast-paced environment with a strong customer service element.
- The median age of the pre-ICP caseload remained stable at 52 weeks in April despite increased volumes, and frontline KPI checks had been met.
- Progress had been made to increase internal frontloading team capacity, with 11 cases allocated in April and further allocations planned in line with targets.
- A sustainable legal team structure had been mapped out to ensure that case levels could be maintained, and new joiners were being supported not only in joining the legal team but embedding within the wider directorate. Data on team performance would continue to be refined and shared within the Council report.
- There had been an increase in the number of cases at the post-ICP stage between January and April 2026 which correlated with a rise in case-to-answer decisions. This was noted as an expected consequence of increased frontloaded investigations passing through the ICP stage. The volume of cases would continue to be monitored.
- Interim order activity had reached a record of 53 hearings in March, representing the highest monthly volume to date, before returning to a more typical level of 25 in April; no specific trend was identified and the rate at which interim orders were granted remained consistent.
- Timeliness improved in April, with interim order hearings listed within an average of 2.6 weeks, meeting the three week KPI following

pressures earlier in the year related to legal assessor availability and adjournments.

- The Decision Review Group continued to review panel decisions and PSA learning points as part of our internal quality assurance processes, with outputs informing panel refresher training and partner communications.
- The directorate improvement plan would focus on customer service and witness support, alongside a review of the threshold policy, with scoping to begin in Quarter 1.

- 4.3 The Council recognised the benefits of strengthening internal legal capability. However, it was noted that the financial impact of the investment in expanding the legal team would need to be included within reporting as it had been financial affordability that had been the driver for its expansion. More granularity on resourcing, including the number of new joiners and leavers, was also requested.

Action: The Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services and the Executive Director of Resources to develop existing financial reporting to incorporate financial investment impact and resourcing.

- 4.4 It was highlighted that technology was not included within the risks and mitigations section of the paper and it was queried as to whether further consideration should be given to its inclusion.

- 4.5 Concerns were raised regarding partner availability and its impact on timeliness. It was suggested that the Head of Adjudication Performance connect with the Partner Project Lead to check on partner recruitment plans.

Action: The Head of Adjudication Performance would connect with the Partner Project Lead to check on partner recruitment plans.

- 4.6 In response to a question regarding the planned review of the threshold policy, the Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services noted that there were opportunities to adjust elements of the policy, although core investigation requirements would remain. The scope of change would depend on the level of risk that the Council was prepared to accept.

- 4.7 In response to a query regarding lessons learned activity related to the expansion of the legal team, it was confirmed that the Quality Assurance team would report on this to the People and Resources Committee (PRC). Early observations included the importance of cross organisation working when working at pace, strengthening employer brand around being a legal services employer, and introducing a more flexible case management structure to avoid a single person holding the corporate knowledge of a case. It was acknowledged that more lessons would be learnt over the first year of operation.

- 4.8 The Council welcomed the introduction of resilience training for staff, recognising its role in supporting the retention of FTP staff. In addition, the

Council noted the mechanisms for monitoring staff wellbeing and morale more broadly, including daily team huddles and pulse surveys.

- 4.9 The recruitment of regulatory investigators was discussed, and it was noted that the revised job title had already increased reach with 300 applications received during the campaign. It was noted that for any future recruitment campaigns, the Government Counter Fraud Profession could be a pool experienced investigators that we may wish to target.
- 4.10 The Council thanked the FTP team for the report, and welcomed the introduction of practical assessment in recruitment, noting its alignment with approaches used in other sectors and its role in building confidence in the suitability of new staff from the outset.

The meeting was briefly adjourned.

5 Finance Report

- 5.1 The Council noted the finance report outlining the HCPC's financial performance to the end of the 2025-26 financial year.
- 5.2 The Executive Director of Resources outlined the following points:
- Income remained below budget due to lower than anticipated international registration application volumes, consistent with trends previously reported. This position would continue to be monitored over the financial year.
 - Expenditure was lower than budgeted due to payroll underspends, partly reflecting vacancies within FTP and lower partner costs. More realistic budget assumptions on how quickly vacancies could be filled had been factored into the 2026-27 budget.
 - The full year surplus of £1m reflected underspends as well as genuine savings and cost reductions, including in relation to the negotiations on the Microsoft licence.
 - Tribunal volumes continued to impact forecast assumptions, and lessons had been incorporated into future financial planning. Strengthened business partnering would inform future reporting.
 - Investment expenditure was below forecast, reflecting the reprofiling of multi-year programmes rather than unplanned underspend. It was noted that investment planning was being reset within a clearer multi-year framework.
 - Work was also underway to strengthen financial planning and analysis capability, including implementation of a new system to reduce reliance on manual processes and improve planning and forecasting.

- 5.3 The Chair commended the Executive Director of Resources and the Finance team for the clarity of the report.

Items for discussion/decision

6 Council appointments

- 6.1 In line with the declarations of interest made earlier in the meeting, the Senior Council Member chaired the item.
- 6.2 The Head of Governance presented the final arrangements for the Chair appointment process, including the composition of the selection panel. Following advice from the PSA, it was proposed to add Council member Lianne Patterson, who would not be seeking reappointment at the end of her term of office, as a fourth member of the appointment panel.
- 6.3 The appointment process for Council members had been updated to provide the required flexibility to the Chair selection panel and to include an opportunity for shortlisted candidates to meet with the Chief Executive and Registrar. It was clarified that this meeting would not form part of the assessment or scoring process but would provide candidates with insight into organisation and strategic context. The option to hold a colleague engagement session for shortlisted candidates was also included as an amendment, reflecting the Council's steer on understanding the cultural impact of candidates. The engagement session would be clearly scoped and would provide candidates with an opportunity to engage with a range of potential colleagues. It was noted that this would incur an additional charge of approximately £650 plus VAT.
- 6.4 The Council noted the stakeholder feedback which had informed the final arrangements and had been reflected in the narrative within the candidate pack emphasising the unique complexity of the HCPC as the UK's largest multi-professional regulator, the importance of ensuring that the voices of HCPC's broad and diverse registrant population are heard, that the successful candidate will require the ability to understand the scope, breadth and differences in the healthcare systems across the UK and have the hard and soft leadership and communication skills necessary to navigate the complexities of healthcare regulation, including during times of significant change in the external environment. Stakeholders welcomed the fact that the role would be advertised as being open to both registrant and lay candidates. The feedback received had been broadly supportive of the proposed approach, and had reinforced the changes already agreed by the Council to the competency framework for the Chair and Council members.
- 6.5 The Council approved:
- the proposed selection panel for the Chair appointment, comprising Dame Carrie MacEwen, Panel Chair, David Stirling, HCPC Registrant and Senior Council Member, Lianne Patterson, HCPC lay member, and Jacqueline Francis, Independent Panel Member;

- the proposed amendments to the appointments process for Council members and other associated processes; and
- the Chair appointment campaign to go-live on 22 June 2026.

6.6 The Council also:

- approved the appointment process for the lay Council member appointment including the composition of the selection panel and noted the timeline for the campaign which was due to go live in the summer; and
- approved the composition of the reappointment panel in relation to John McEvoy's appointment for a second term and noted the timings for the process.

6.7 Council members were encouraged to support the promotion of the appointment campaigns through their networks.

7 Annual equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) update

7.1 The EDI Strategic Lead presented the annual update, highlighting continued improvements in the quality and availability of EDI data.

7.2 The Council noted the following points:

- There had been continued improvement in the quality, availability and integration of EDI data across organisational reporting, including through the data hub and FTP reporting.
- Updates to the standards of proficiency and standards of conduct, performance and ethics had embedded EDI as a core regulatory function, with further updates to the standards of education and training in progress. These had been informed by stakeholder engagement and an impact analysis, with additional consideration being given to the role of continuing professional development (CPD) in supporting registrants.
- Quality indicators had been developed to support the consistent application of EDI within education and training, informed by stakeholder engagement and good practice.
- Targeted resources had been developed to support registrants who experience or witness discrimination, and a proactive approach had been taken to engage with external reviews and developments, including the Mann Review.
- Progress had been made in relation to internal EDI, including increasing workforce diversity and enhanced pay gap reporting across ethnicity, gender and disability. It was noted that translating this insight

into meaningful action remained a key priority, with inclusion of pay gap data on the strategic risk register supporting organisational focus.

- The PSA had provided positive feedback on the HCPC's approach to EDI, particularly the quality and transparency of its data, with the organisation recognised as demonstrating good practice.
- Emerging changes to PSA EDI standards towards a more proactive approach were noted, and it was recognised that the HCPC was well positioned to respond to this direction.
- EDI insight was increasingly being used to inform organisational priorities, including analysis of engagement with complaints processes to better understand where inequalities may arise.
- Work was under way to develop a new standalone EDI strategy aligned to the corporate strategy.

7.3 The Council noted that EDI activity had been undertaken collaboratively across the organisation, and emphasised the importance of EDI insight informing organisational priorities.

7.4 The Council queried whether the HCPC's EDI strategy should sit within the people strategy or as a standalone strategy. It was agreed that the Council would explore this further as part of a focused future discussion. It was also requested that the workshop include a focus on the impact of all the different actions taken to reduce inequalities.

Action: The Governance team would arrange a Council workshop for a focused discussion on the development and positioning of the EDI strategy.

Action: The EDI Strategic Lead would include a focus on the impact of all the different actions taken to date by the HCPC to reduce inequalities as part of the workshop plans.

7.5 The Council noted that 99% of registrants provided EDI data, and it was confirmed that 'prefer not to say' responses were included within this figure; the potential for further analysis of these responses to provide additional insight was noted.

7.6 A Council Apprentice reflected on a recent discussion with the Head of Insight, Intelligence and Analytics regarding the data hub, noting that while data was largely quantitative, bridging the gap between demographic data and lived experience would be essential to understanding inequalities. It was suggested that the recently appointed Head of Professionalism and Outreach could provide qualitative insight into registrant experience of the HCPC, alongside analysing data to understand who engages with data collection processes.

Items for noting

8 Council forward plan

- 8.1 The Council noted the forward plan.

9 Council reflection

- 9.1 Council member Pameleta Ricketts reflected that the discussions had been informative and engaging, noting in particular the proactive approach to address FTP challenges and the value of the discrimination awareness training and finance reporting. The HCPC's evolving approach to AI was commendable, acknowledging the importance of an evidence-based approach. Commendation was given to the EDI and finance report, and the informative nature of the discrimination awareness training sessions was noted.
- 9.2 The Council had also considered future organisational changes, including forthcoming Council member and Chair appointments, with an emphasis on maintaining stability during a time of change.

10 Resolution

- 10.1 The Council resolved that the remainder of the meeting would be held in private, because the matters being discussed related to the following:
- (a) information relating to a registrant, former registrant or application for registration;
 - (b) information relating to an employee or office holder, former employee or office holder or applicant for any post or office;
 - (c) the terms of, or expenditure under, a tender or contract for the purchase or supply of goods or services or the acquisition or disposal of property;
 - (d) negotiations or consultation concerning labour relations between the Council and its employees;
 - (e) any issue relating to legal proceedings which are being contemplated or instituted by or against the Council;
 - (f) action being taken to prevent or detect crime or to prosecute offenders;
 - (g) the source of information given to the Council in confidence; or
 - (h) any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, is confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Council's functions.

Item	Reason for Exclusion
11	H
12	H
13	H
14	G
15	G

Item	Reason for Exclusion
16	H
17	H
18	H

The meeting adjourned at 1.15pm.

Chair:

Date:

DRAFT