

Health Professions Council
Education and Training Committee – 29th March 2006

Use of Lay Visitors

Executive Summary

Introduction

On 15 December 2005, the Education and Training Committee agreed that the Executive should prepare a paper on the role of Lay Visitors, to be presented in March 2006. It was requested that this paper should highlight the current Lay Visitor role, how other regulators see this role and the financial implications of using Lay Visitors.

24 Lay Visitors were appointed in July 2003 however there are no records in either Human Resources or Education Department detailing their specific role. The Executive, therefore believe that Lay Visitors were appointed under the same conditions and to carry out the same function as Registrant Visitors. To date no Lay Visitors have been asked to attend approvals events. Details of the Visitor Role Brief can be found at Appendix 1.

All but one of the Health Regulators contacted by the Executive use Lay Visitors on a regular basis. The General Chiropractic, Dental, Medical, Optical and Osteopathic Councils all use Lay Visitors on every approval event. These Lay Visitors are used as full members of the approvals team, with no distinction made between their duties and those of the Registrant Visitors. The Nursery and Midwifery Council do not use Lay Visitors on any of their approval events.

In line with HPC policy, HPC approval events are currently attended by an Education Executive and at least two Visitors, one of whom must be from the same part of the Register as the programme being visited and one of whom has sufficient academic background in the relevant profession. The HPC executive believe that the HPC panel, as currently sourced and arranged, meets all the quality assurance requirements in that; the profession is represented, the academic and clinical aspects of the programme and profession are addressed, and role of the Education Executive is to ensure that parties fully understand the process and that those processes are followed correctly. Further, it is planned that the Manager of the Education Department will undertake observation visits with all staff to ensure that due process is followed and consistency is maintained.

The selection and use of Visitors has been organised in this way for over one year and has not presented the Education Department with any significant problems. The Executive has found however, that for some of the smaller professions, selecting Visitors in line with current policy can occasionally present a difficulty in terms of both conflict of interest and practical/academic experience. Thus, while the Executive believes that the quality assurance aspect of visits is satisfactorily addressed by the current arrangements, we would welcome the opportunity to utilise Lay Visitors where conflict of interest or experiential issues arise with Registrant Visitors.

Further, to use Lay people as a 3rd Visitors on each Approval Event would have significant financial implications for the HPC. Since January 2005, an average of 9 Visits per month have taken place. The average cost for Visitors to attend is £250 (including fee, travel expenses and subsistence). If Lay Visitors were used to Quality Assure the HPC's process, this would cost the HPC and additional £2,250 per month.

Decision

The Committee are asked to approve the use of Lay Visitors, only where a conflict of interest occurs or where an experiential issues occurs and where an appropriate Registrant Visitor cannot be sourced.

Background Information

24 Lay Visitors were appointed in July 2003. Only 12 of those appointed have received training. No Lay Visitor has ever attended an Approvals Event.

Resource Implications

Training for remaining Lay Visitors.

Financial Implications

Incorporated in the 2006/7 budget

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Visitor Role Brief