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## **Education and Training Committee, 17 November 2011**

### **Consultation on an amendment to the Health Professions Council (Registration and Fees) Rules Order of Council 2003**

#### **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 January and March 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 Committee is invited to discuss, agree, and recommend to Council:

- 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.

- Arranging for printing and mailing of rules consultation document.

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**

7 November 2012

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## **Consultation on an amendment to the Health Professions Council (Registration and Fees) Rules Order of Council 2003**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This document seeks the views of stakeholders on a proposed 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.
- 1.2 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. 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 **3 January to 26 March 2012**.
- 1.4 Social workers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are separately registered by the Care Council for Wales, Scottish Social Services Council 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
  - 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 General Social Care Council (GSCC). The GSCC maintains registers of social workers and social work students in England, 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. At that time, the HPC is due to be renamed the ‘Health and Care Professions Council’ to reflect its enlarged remit.
- 3.3 The GSCC will close on 31 July 2012, and its register for social workers in England will transfer to the HPC.<sup>1</sup> However, the necessary legislation to allow this to happen has not yet been passed by Parliament and therefore this date may change.
- 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 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, or that they 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Schedule five of the Health Professions Council (Registration and Fees) Rules Order of Council 2003 outlines the registration end dates for each of the parts of the HPC Register. 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, we need to add the relevant date for the profession's renewal cycle to our registration and fees rules.
- 4.7 Although the legislative process to transfer the regulation of social workers in England is ongoing, the necessary legislation has yet to be passed. However, we believe that it is important to consult on the proposed amendment to our rules at an early stage, to allow enough time to benefit from the input of stakeholders. In particular, this allows time for a full twelve-week public consultation period.

## **5. Proposal for consultation**

- 5.1 We are proposing to amend schedule five of the Health Professions Council (Registration and Fees) Rules Order of Council 2003 in order to set the registration cycle for social workers in England.
- 5.2 The GSCC will close on 31 July 2012, and its register for social workers in England will transfer to the HPC. We propose that social workers in England should be asked to renew their registration from early August 2012 until 30 November 2012.
- 5.3 Social workers in England will 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. This renewal period takes place in a relatively quieter period for our Registration Department which means we will be able to provide a more efficient service to those renewing their registration.

## **6. Summary of proposal**

- 6.1 In summary, we are proposing the following:
  - 31 July 2012 - the GSCC will be abolished and responsibility for regulating social workers transferred 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
  - The end of the registration cycle for social workers in England will be 30 November every two years thereafter (i.e. the following registration cycle would end on 30 November 2016)

## **7. Your comments**

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 **26 March 2011**.

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.<sup>2</sup>

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](mailto: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.

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<sup>2</sup> There is more information about how we run our consultations on our website here: [www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations](http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations)