Education and Training Committee, 6 June 2013

Service user and carer visitors as part of visit panels

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

At the Education and Training Committee's meeting on 7 March 2013, the Committee discussed proposals for a pilot of 'service user / carer visitors' as part of approval visit panels.

The Committee raised a number of issues about the purpose and scope of such a pilot including the possible value of involving service users / carers as visitors; the role of such visitors; and the skills and experience that might be required.

This paper seeks to address these issues and invites the Committee to agree to instruct the Executive to prepare a pilot. If the Committee agrees, a further paper on the detail of the pilot will be presented for discussion at the Committee's meeting in September 2013.

Decision

The Committee is invited to:

- discuss this paper;

- agree in principle that service users / carers should be involved as part of visit panels; and

- instruct the Executive to prepare a pilot of service user / carer visitors as part of the panel for approval visits.

Background information

Outlined in paper.

Resource implications

Discussed in paper; accounted for in Education Department and Partners Department planning for 2013-2014.

Financial implications

Discussed in paper; accounted for in Education Department and Partners Department budgets for 2013-2014. If the Committee decides to proceed, further information will be provided in the next paper.

Appendices

- The arrangements of other regulators overseen by the Professional Standards Authority

- Visitor role brief

Date of paper

27 May 2013

Service users and carers as part of visit panels

1. Introduction

1.1   At its last meeting, the Committee considered the outcomes of a consultation which proposed amending the standards of education and training (SETs) and guidance to make service user and carer involvement a compulsory requirement for approved programmes. The Committee agreed that the standards should be amended, subject to further discussion and agreement of exact wording at this meeting.

1.2   The Committee also discussed proposals for a pilot of 'service user and carer visitors' who would work alongside other visitors as part of approval visit panels.[1] However, the Committee raised a number of issues about the scope for such a pilot. The key questions which arose from that discussion included the following.

- Why service user / carer visitors? What value might they bring?

- What should be the service user / carer visitor role?

- What skills and experience should we look for in service user / carer visitors? What about representativeness and currency of experience?

- What are the arrangements for the pilot?

- What should be the role of 'visitors from a lay background' going forward?

1.3   This paper is divided into seven sections.

- Section one introduces the document.

- Section two outlines background to the proposals included in this paper.

- Section three summarises another regulator's evaluation of involving service users and carers at visits.

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[1] Education and Training Committee, 7 March 2013. Service user and carer visitor pilot. http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003F13Enc10-Serviceuserandcarerpilot-ETCpaper-March2013.pdf

- Section four discusses the rationale for service user / carer visitors and identifies some immediate issues.

- Section five outlines arrangements for a pilot of service user / carer visitors.

- Section six discusses the role of visitors from a lay background going forward.

- Section seven outlines the decisions the Committee is invited to make.

1.4　Appendix 1 is a table setting out the other regulators' approaches in this area. Appendix 2 is a copy of the existing visitor role brief, for reference.

2. Background

2.1   The Committee's previous discussion on this topic has been informed by a number of factors. This includes the existing SETs guidance which suggests how evidence derived from service user involvement activity could contribute to meeting the existing SETs; previous regulatory requirements for the involvement of service users and carers in social work education in England; and the HCPC's overall commitment to involving service users and carers in its work.

2.2   This section outlines some background which informs the remaining discussion in this paper.

PSA requirements

2.3   The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) (formerly the 'CHRE') undertakes an annual performance review of the regulators. As part of this review, its standards of good regulation require that in quality assuring education and training programmes, regulators should ensure that: 'Students'/trainees' and patients' perspectives are taken into account as part of the evaluation' (4.3(ii)).

2.4   In its 2011-2012 report, the PSA said that we did not meet this standard, but noted our progress in consulting on a new standard of education and training and in considering the outcomes of a pilot of visitors from a lay background (see 2.6 and 2.10).[2]

Other regulators

2.5   Appendix 1 outlines the approaches of other regulators in this area. The following observations can be made.

- All of the regulators involve 'lay visitors' but the experience which is required varies – some use lay educationalists, whereas others draw from a range of professional backgrounds (similar to lay members of Council).

- The role of visitors is not normally circumscribed (at least in a formal sense).

- Only one of the regulators has a dedicated role which specifically aims to benefit from the service user / carer perspective.

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[2] CHRE (2012). Performance review report 2011/12.
http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/scrutiny-quality/chre-performance-review-report-2011-12.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Pilot of visitors from a lay background

2.6   The HCPC's pool of visitors includes four individuals who are educationalists but who are not registered, or eligible to be registered, in one of the professions regulated by the HCPC.

2.7   These visitors are frequently referred to using the shorthand term 'lay visitors'. However, there is no formal 'lay visitor' role as distinct from the role of 'visitor'. The role brief for the visitor role makes no essential or desirable requirement that applicants are HCPC registered.

2.8   The HCPC's arrangements for visits are that they are conducted by at least one but in practice almost always two visitors from the same profession as the programme being visited. As a result, visitors with a lay background have been seldom used, but may be used where a third opinion is required or where there is no other suitable 'registrant visitor'.

2.9   In order to explore the value of a 'lay voice' as part of visit panels, a pilot was previously conducted. This pilot involved adding visitors from lay backgrounds as a third member of approval visits over a six month period. Questionnaires were then completed by those involved in an attempt to evaluate the added benefit – the visitors, both lay and registrant; the Education officer supporting the visit; and the education provider being visited.[3]

2.10   The Committee concluded as a result of the pilot that there was no clear evidence in the evaluation that lay visitors added additional value to the approval process above that normally expected of any visitor.[4] The Committee agreed the following as a result.

- The visitor role brief should be adapted to remove the requirement for specific education experience (e.g. as a programme leader) so that a service user and carer perspective could be attracted.

- A second pilot should be considered using these 'service user and carer visitors' in the approval process.

- Options to increase the involvement of visitors from lay backgrounds should be considered.

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[3] Education and Training Committee, 8 March 2012. Lay visitor pilot.
http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100038FE11-layvisitorpilot.pdf
[4] It should be noted that the evaluation of the pilot did not conclude that lay visitors added no value, only that their inclusion in addition to two professional visitors did not appear to accrue significant additional benefits. There was little concern about the inclusion of such visitors in the approval process.

3. GSCC visitors

3.1   The General Social Care Council (GSCC) published a report prior to its closure, which reflects on its experience of using people with experience of social work services as part of visit teams.[5] The learning from this report has been taken into account in developing the proposals discussed in section four.

3.2   The GSCC referred to people with experience of social work services as 'visitors'. They worked alongside GSCC 'inspectors' from the social work profession. The visitors had experience of a range of social work services including adult mental health services; disability services; children's services; and experience as carers. They were 'mostly recruited from groups of people using social work services who were already supporting HEIs delivering the social work degree' (page 11 of the GSCC report). The Report's recommendations appear to indicate that at very least a prescriptive role brief and person specification was not used in recruiting visitors.

3.3   The GSCC's evaluation of its work in this area was based on interviews with inspectors; education providers; and visitors about their views and experiences.

3.4   The following benefits of the visitor role were identified.

- 'Practising what we preach' – there was a strong belief that if the GSCC was requiring that service users and carers were involved in programmes, that it should also demonstrate this commitment itself.

- The involvement of the service user or carer as part of the visit team acted as a reminder to others that social work education and training is about equipping students to work with the public.

- Service users and carers were sometimes able to ask challenging questions which might otherwise be missed, particularly about the extent and quality of service user and carer involvement in programmes.

- Service users and carers were able to bring to bear their knowledge and experience of contact with other education providers.

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[5] General Social Care Council (2011). Inspecting social work degree courses. A report on the contribution and effectiveness of people who use social work services. http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120708184859/http://www.gscc.org.uk/page/111/Social+work+education+publications.html

3.5 The following challenges of the visitor role were identified.

- There was sometimes a lack of clarity about the visitor role – for example, different views about whether the role was, and/or should be, narrowly confined to ensuring that the service user and carer involvement requirement was met.

- Service users and carers may not always have the 'technical' knowledge to be involved in all aspects of discussion at a visit.

- Some service users and carers were considered by some inspectors to have gone beyond the boundaries of the role of the regulator at visits.

- There were a variety of views about whether visitors with experience of social work services, and with some experience of education, were those who added the most value, or whether visitors who brought only experience of services could be just as valuable.

3.6 The report makes a number of conclusions and recommendations. Perhaps most relevant to the HCPC is the recommendation that the regulator should be clear about the role and expectations of the visitors and determine from the outset the model it considers will work best – for example, whether such visitors should be required to have particular skills and experience to indicate the capacity to develop an understanding of the regulator's work; and whether they should be 'equal' to others involved at visits, or have a specific focus to their role.

3.7 There was overall general agreement across the different groups that using visitors with experience of services added value.

4. Service user / carer visitors

4.1   At the last meeting, the Committee concluded overall that the purpose and added value of a service user / carer visitor needed to be explored further before it would be possible to formulate a meaningful pilot of these arrangements.

Service users / carers or lay visitors?

4.2   This paper discusses the creation of a 'service user / carer' visitor role, rather than a 'lay visitor' role. The reasons for this are as follows.

- The term 'lay visitor' is already in use as a shorthand term to refer to the small number of visitors who are not registered, or eligible to be registered with the HCPC. These visitors are educationalists with significant experience of the delivery and quality assurance of education and training in higher education.

- The previous pilot of visitors from a lay background did not reveal any evidence of significant added value over and above visitors from a registered background.

- The new SET being introduced from 2014-2015 is for 'service user and carer involvement'.

- A 'service user / carer' visitor role might better capture the perspectives and experiences of those who use or are affected by the services of HCPC registered professionals, and their carers, without requiring an educationalist background.

4.3   An alternative would be to brand this as a 'lay visitor' role; although 'lay visitor' has been used as a shorthand term for a number of years, no such role formally exists at this moment in time (see paragraphs 2.60 to 2.10). However, if this was the case, careful consideration would need to be given to what 'lay' would constitute in this instance, and given the findings of the previous pilot, it would seem necessary to develop a role brief which was clear that 'lay' in this instance was more than just not being registered with the HCPC.

Why include service users and carers as part of visit panels? What might be the added value?

4.4   Many of the arguments that could be made at the level of principle for including service users and carers as part of visit teams follow on from those advanced for including a SET requiring education providers to involve service users and carers in their programmes (see separate paper on the agenda at this meeting).

4.5   The specific arguments that could be made for the potential added value of involving service users and carers as part of visit panels include the following.

- **Our commitment to involvement**. If we will be requiring education providers to involve service users and carers in order for their programmes to become or to remain approved (on the basis that we consider this is consistent with public protection), how can we justify not involving these groups in some way in our own decision making processes?

- **Integrity of the process**. We already involve at least one lay panel member as part of every panel that hears a fitness to practise case. Lay members also sit on the Council and its Committees. In this context a lay member is someone who is not and could not be registered with the HCPC and who has been appointed against role-specific competencies which include the ability to contribute to effective decision making. This lay involvement is primarily about public faith and confidence in the integrity of the process – to ensure that decisions are made (and are seen to be made) in the public interest and not solely in the interests of the professions or of an individual professional. A similar argument could be made about involving service users and carers in the decision making process about approved programmes.

- **A broader perspective**. A service user / carer visitor might provide an additional perspective that would add value to the visit the process – for example, asking challenging questions drawn from their particular background and experience.

4.6   In the consultation on the new SET, we received a few comments to the effect that service users and carers should be on visit panels as the best way of ensuring that the new SET was met effectively, and that we should also speak directly to service users and carers at visits.

What should be the service user and carer visitor role?

4.7   The GSCC's experience indicates that it is important that the scope of the particular role should be clear from the outset. This is one that is also linked to the skills and experience required of a service user / carer visitor at point of

appointment, and is also linked to how they are prepared and supported in their role.

4.8   The Executive suggests that the role should not be circumscribed to focus on one particular area or SET. Such visitors should instead be encouraged and supported to contribute to decision making on as equal a basis as possible. In practice, some may feel more able to contribute in some areas than in others, at least until they build more familiarity with the role (in much the same way that visitors from a registrant background have to become familiar with our approach to quality assurance). Although not completely analogous, lay fitness to practise panel members do not have a circumscribed role and contribute to all decision making, even where the features of a particular case may mean that the technical knowledge of the registrant member is required.

What skills and experience should we look for in service user / carer visitors?

4.9   In the Committee's discussion at the last meeting, issues were raised about the 'target audience' of the role and the skills and experience of those we would recruit.

4.10   The experience of the GSCC indicates that it is important to ensure relevant skills and experience so that visitors can make an effective contribution to the task they are being asked to carry out. In particular, it will be important that individuals have excellent communication skills; some understanding of education; and some experience and ability to make decisions as part of a group.

4.11   Desirable criteria would be likely to include previous experience of being involved in making decisions as part of a service user or carer group. Including this as a desirable criteria would mitigate concerns about narrowing the pool of potential visitors too far, but would indicate the kinds of experiences that are likely to be very valuable – experience as part of a patient group, or as a service user or carer already involved in education and training in some way (for example, as a member of a university service user and carer group), is likely to be helpful in equipping an individual with the skills and experience to carry out the visitor role.

4.12   Given the breadth and diversity of the HCPC Register, the Executive suggests that it would not be feasible or indeed necessary to target particular sub-sections of service users and carers (e.g. mental health, social care and so on). Instead, the requirement would be for experience as a service user of health or social care services or as a carer (or words to that effect). Service user / carer visitors would be able to participate in visits of programmes across different professions.

What about representativeness and currency of experience?

4.13   Two particular issues discussed at the last meeting were about attracting 'professional service users' who might be unrepresentative; and a view that currency of experience of health and social care services would be crucial, necessitating frequent turnover in the visitor pool.

4.14   The Executive suggests that these issues are not specific to this proposed visitor role. There is no guarantee amongst the current visitor pool that visitors are necessarily representative of other registrants in their profession, or of educators in their profession, and no guarantee that they are necessarily currently employed in a 'frontline' role in higher education.

4.15   The Executive further suggests that these issues are far less important than ensuring that the essential and desirable criteria, and how roles are advertised, attracts the individuals with the skills and experiences to make an effective contribution to the visit process.

4.16   The important factor is that those acting as visitors continue to have the competences required to be effective in their role. This is ensured by fixed term appointments which are renewable subject to satisfactory performance and participation in the partner appraisal process. We can anticipate that there will be some turnover of service user / carer visitors, as with other visitor roles, ensuring a variety of perspectives is maintained.

5. Arrangements for the pilot

5.1   Should the principle of the inclusion of service user and carer involvement on visit panels be agreed, the Executive will present a follow up paper at September's Committee meeting. This will address the detailed arrangements for a pilot of service user / carer visitors as part of the approval process, including a service user / carer visitor role brief. The indicative timescales for the pilot are included in table 1 overleaf.

5.2   If agreed, it may be unlikely that the Committee would decide to overturn the principle of service user / carer involvement on visit panels as a result of the pilot outcomes. However, a pilot would prompt future consideration about the most effective use of service user / carer visitor involvement in light of any outcomes. This would include consideration of the frequency of use of these visitors across all operational processes (mandatory or targeted?; involved in approvals only or all processes?); service user / carer visitors' remit in relation to the SETS and other visitor roles; and the operational implications of a full implementation of service user / carer visitors (including any training and support needs). It is for these reasons the Executive believe it would be appropriate to deliver a pilot in the first instance, rather than a full implementation of service user / carer visitors to all approval and monitoring processes.

5.3   The Executive would conduct a pilot in the 2014-2015 academic year. Programmes subject to an approval visit in the 2014-2015 academic year will be required to evidence how they meet the new service user and carer involvement standard and in doing so demonstrate how service users and carers are involved in the design and delivery of the programme. In addition to this, the agenda for approval visits will most likely include a mandatory meeting with service users and carers from 2014-2015 onwards. This would enable visitors to speak directly with service users and carers involved with a programme.

5.4   Recruitment and training activities have already been accounted for in both the Partners and Education Department budgets for 2013-2014. The Education Department budget for 2014-2015 will include provisions for the delivery of the pilot where the service user / carer visitor will be a third member of a visit panel.

Table 1 Service user and carer visitor pilot – proposed timetable

Key activities	Anticipated timescales
ETC agree pilot and revised visitor role brief	September 2013
Recruit service user and carer visitors	September – February 2013
Schedule visitors to approval visits	March – November 2014
Train service user and carer visitors	April - June 2014
Delivery of pilot	September 2014 – April 2015
Follow up Committee paper	June 2015

6. The continued role of visitors from a lay background

6.1 Visitors from a lay background are currently used on an ad-hoc basis, primarily where there is a lack of available visitors with educational experience from one of the professions regulated by HCPC. From an operational perspective, this provides flexibility within the visitor pool and ensures approval and monitoring activities are not negatively impacted by inadequate visitor resources.

6.2 Visitors from a lay background provide educational expertise to inform key recommendations made to the Committee about the approval and on-going approval of programmes. Their contributions to approval and monitoring processes are broadly similar to the role a registrant educator performs when assessing a programme from another HCPC profession. In both cases, these visitors work alongside a registrant visitor (usually with experience of practice rather than education) from the profession within which the programme is being considered. In this context they provide the necessary experience of education delivery and quality assurance to inform how the standards of education and training are met.

6.3 As individuals who provide expertise primarily from their experience as users of service, it is not intended that service user / carer visitors will hold the requisite understanding of education and quality assurance to fulfil, in part, the role currently fulfilled by a lay visitor. For this reason, the introduction of service user / carer visitors should not be viewed as a suitable replacement for this role.

6.4 With these points in mind, the Executive considers that visitors from a lay background have an important role in ensuring HCPC continues to carry out its statutory function with respect to the approval and monitoring of education programmes.

7. Decisions

7.1   The Committee is invited to:

- discuss this paper;

- agree in principle that service users / carers should be involved as part of visit panels; and

- instruct the Executive to conduct a pilot of service user / carer visitors as part of the panel for approval visits.

7.2   Subject to agreement of the above, the Executive will present a further paper on the pilot at the next meeting, to include a draft role brief for service user / carer visitors and information about how the outcome of the pilot will be evaluated.

Appendix 1: The arrangements of the other regulators overseen by the Professional Standards Authority

Regulatory body	Lay visitor?	Service user / carer visitor?	Who is a 'lay visitor'?	Scope of 'lay visitor' role
General Chiropractic Council (GCC)	Yes	No	Lay visitor – educationalist (Chair) Lay visitor – Education and Training Committee member with range of possible experience	Not limited to specific areas.
General Dental Council (GDC)	Yes	No	Lay visitor (Chair) – normally experience of education / regulation (normally also with experience of being a dental patient).	Not limited to specific areas, but asked to represent the interests of dental patients.
General Optical Council (GOC)	Yes	Yes	Lay visitor – education background Patient champions – service user perspective, recruited against competencies, in the first instance from the GOC's PPI Group.	Not limited to specific areas. Lay visitors expected to bring their educationalist experience. Patient champions represent the patient / public view.
General Osteopathic Council (GOsC)	Yes	No	Lay visitor – experience such as education, accountancy or from another professional field	Not limited to specific areas. But may play more of a role in activities such as meeting students, rather than observing clinical training.

General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	Yes	No	Lay visitor – experience such as education or regulation.	Not limited to specific areas. But tend to focus more on 'non-curriculum issues'.
Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)	Yes	No	Lay visitor – experience in higher education / professional education.	Not limited to specific areas. Currently only used in quality assurance of midwifery supervision arrangements. Plan to extend use to quality assurance monitoring visits.

Notes

- Table compiled from CHRE annual report 2011-2012 and from contact with individual regulators.
- In all instances, a 'lay visitor', as a minimum, is someone not registered (or eligible to be registered) by the regulator.
- The term 'visitor' is used in the table; regulators use a variety of different terms including inspector and member.
- Service / user carer visitor column relates to whether there is a dedicated role which specifically seeks to include the service user / carer perspective.
- The PSNI uses the same arrangements as the GPhC.
- Information about the General Medical Council's (GMC's) approach was not available at the time of submitting this paper.