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Principles for service user involvement in quality assurance of education programmes

Executive Summary

This paper sets out draft principles to guide our approach to service user involvement in the quality assurance of education and training programmes. The Committee is asked to consider the principles, and the reasons underpinning their development and agree them for use within the education function in the future.

Previous consideration	The role of lay visitors in education quality assurance, 10 March 2020
Decision	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• agree the draft principles for service user involvement subject to any further amendments based on discussions,• agree the draft principles to be trialled within the new quality assurance model currently being piloted, and• agree service users to be appointed as expert advisors in keeping with the amended competency framework for this role as outlined in Appendix 1.
Next steps	Outcome of the discussions will inform how we take this work forward through our new quality assurance model work currently being piloted.
Strategic priority	The strategic priorities set in 2018 are no longer current. We are developing a new strategy that we aim to confirm at the end of 2020
Risk	Strategic risk 1: failure to deliver effective regulatory functions Strategic risk 2: failure to anticipate and respond to changes in the external environment Strategic risk 3: failure to be a trusted regulator and meet stakeholder expectations Strategic risk 4: failure to be an efficient regulator
Financial and resource implications	None at this stage.

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Introduction

This paper sets out draft principles to guide our approach to service user involvement in the quality assurance of education and training programmes. The Committee is asked to consider the principles, and the reasons underpinning their development and agree them for use within the education function in the future.

Background

The HCPC is reviewing the involvement of lay visitors in its quality assurance processes. In March 2020, the Committee agreed that the current involvement of lay visitors should be paused whilst this review is ongoing. Alongside this review, the Committee also agreed in June 2020 to implement a new quality assurance model, firstly through a series of pilots commencing in January 2021. Subject to the outcome of these pilots, full implementation of the new quality assurance model is earmarked for September 2021. Any future direction regarding the involvement of service users in quality assurance will be focused on how this is embedded within the new quality assurance model.

Challenges with the current model

At its meeting in March, the Committee agreed that the challenges with the current model of lay visitor involvement meant it was difficult to maintain these arrangements going forward. The challenges were summarised as follows:

- Lay visitors are asked to perform the same role as registrant visitors and receive the same visitor fee as a result. This is despite a clear disparity in the education specific experience between the two roles which impacts on how fully lay visitors can contribute to the breadth of assessment considerations which are common to the approval process.
- This limitation results primarily from the role's specification, which focuses on utilising traditional service user perspectives, without any additional requirements regarding requisite knowledge or experience of education delivery.
- In practice, this means lay visitors will in most cases, defer to registrant visitors judgements for most areas of the standards outside of those related specifically to service user and carer involvement and experience.
- There are no elements of the standards themselves (or for that matter within our legislation), which requires lay involvement to enable a visitor panel to operate effectively

On this basis, the Committee agreed new models of service user engagement should be explored to enable further discussion on this topic.

Section 1: Considerations underpinning proposed principles

The purpose of service user involvement

The proposals put forward in this paper are made on the basis that the Committee intend service user involvement to become more focused within the quality assurance of education programmes. This is primarily to ensure the value add for this role is

maximised, and that the challenges outlined above are avoided in any future engagement models. To achieve this outcome, one key point which distinguishes this intent from the current arrangements is that:

- Service users provide expertise based on their experience of involvement as a recipient of registrants' practise. Service users are not expected to inform findings across the breadth of the education standards.

Previous discussion papers have highlighted the difficulty lay visitors have in fulfilling their role based on its current design. When we surveyed visitors for their reflections on the current arrangements (both registrant and lay) we found broad consensus that there was variability in the extent to which lay visitors could provide input and challenge across the breadth of the standards. Looking forward, most felt there was an opportunity for service user perspectives to be included more thematically within the quality assurance processes. However, lay visitors generally felt they would prefer to continue with their involvement in the full approval process as a third member of the panel.

The Committee may feel the remit to 'provide balance to registrant visitors findings' across the breadth of education standards is perhaps better suited to a lay visitor with experience of education delivery outside of the professions we regulate. On this point, the Committee have previously agreed they do not see the need for this role, with further checks and balance on registrant visitor findings already provided by both the Executive, the Committee (and its Panel) and education providers themselves through their observations. Visitors from other professions are also routinely paired together to provide broader education and professional perspectives.

Redefining the lay visitor role

These proposals include provision for a redefinition of the existing lay visitor role. We propose to change the role to act as a 'Service user expert advisor'. This would be carried out in accordance with the role brief agreed by the Committee in March 2020 for the use of expert advisors in the quality assurance processes¹. We have made further amendments to the competency framework for expert advisors to make it more widely applicable to the role of service users. A copy of the revised competency framework is included as Appendix 1.

The expert advisor role was originally created to support curriculum review for new and emerging areas of practice across professions (e.g. new clinical scientist modalities). The role was designed to support visitors in their decision making by providing expert views. With the amendments to the competency framework as proposed, this intent aligns well to support service user involvement being designed in a targeted way going forward. This will provide the necessary clarity around our intent for the role and will allow for greater flexibility in how service users are included within processes, in line with the principles outlined in this paper.

With those key considerations in mind, the remainder of this paper discusses the draft principles developed to guide service user involvement in education quality assurance going forward.

¹ [The use of expert advisors in the approval and monitoring of education programmes](#), ETC, March 2020

Section 2: Draft principles for service user involvement

We propose to firstly establish a framework to guide how they are embedded within our quality assurance model. Through the engagement activities we have conducted, it is clear there are opportunities to make service users involved in a targeted manner, which provides targeted and tangible benefit to the overall assessment of programmes against our standards.

Following engagement with the visitors and the executive, we propose the following principles:

Principle	Why it is important	Implications for involvement
Service user perspectives are different to registrant and lay perspectives.	Service users provide different perspectives on education and training based on their experience of healthcare services provided by our registrants. These are different and unique from registrant and lay perspectives regarding education. This insight is important in setting and maintaining standards which provide effective public protection and uphold confidence in the practice of registrants.	Service user perspectives are encompassed in the remit of the service user role and the role is embedded to utilise these perspectives effectively.
Decision making is more informed where there is effective service user involvement.	Service user perspectives add value to the decision-making process used to determine the ability of education programmes to meet our standards.	Service users are involved where their inclusion meaningfully informs the assessment of the relevant areas of the standards, primarily where they focus on service user involvement and experience.
Service users act independently to advise registrant visitors in their statutory duties.	Service users are engaged in an effective and targeted manner, which is reflective of their skills, expertise and experience. This supports registrant visitors in making informed decisions in keeping with their statutory role.	Service users are appointed as expert advisers to the visitors regarding matters of service user involvement in education programmes.

Applying these principles

We explored how these principles might be applied through the existing quality assurance models. We also discussed similar examples with our lay visitors to gather their thoughts on these case examples.

Case examples	Overview
Thematic review of institutions and programmes through periodic monitoring	<p>Service users undertake assessment of service user involvement through targeted risk-based monitoring activities.</p> <p>Within the current processes, the visitors could consider the additional documentary requirements around how education providers have monitored the involvement of service users and carers for the last two years.</p> <p>Within new Approved Education Provider monitoring proposals, service users review institution wide implementation of service user involvement strategies. Further opportunities to triangulate their findings could involve further discussions with key provider contacts. Service users provide an expert view to inform visitors' final risk-based recommendations.</p>
Targeted involvement in the approval of institutions and programmes	<p>Service users are involved in a targeted role within the approval process to consider institution and programme level service user involvement.</p> <p>Within the existing approval process, this could involve a documentary review of evidence relevant to service user involvement.</p> <p>Within our new staged approval process, assessment is made of institution wide strategies regarding service user involvement. This involves both documentary review and where beneficial further discussion with key provider contacts. Service users provide an expert view to inform visitors' final risk-based recommendations.</p>
Informing the raising of threshold requirements	<p>Service users are engaged to understand how the threshold expectations of service user involvement in education should be raised over time. This informs the Committee's discussions around this point, which enables further policy regarding our requirements to be established through informed service user engagement. This provides basis for monitoring institutions against raised threshold expectations.</p>

Key points to note around the application of these principles

- The case study examples demonstrate how the principles can be applied effectively through the new quality assurance model and existing quality processes.
- Generally, the principles are more widely applicable to the new quality assurance model which provides more opportunity for thematic based engagement and review activities of institutions and programmes across the breadth of the model (rather than being confined to one process, as is currently the case).
- Focus around service user involvement must provide scope for considerations around matters of resourcing, quality and viability which may bring into play other areas of the standards.
- Lay visitors emphasised the importance of ensuring their involvement is not 'tokenistic'. Enabling their involvement in more than documents-based processes will assist in avoiding this perception, particularly where focused discussions around service user and learner involvement are taking place.

- Lay visitors felt strongly that they would prefer to be a formal member of a visit panel, rather than acting in an adviser to create parity between the respective roles. They felt the latter could be viewed as tokenistic and would be perceived as a lesser role to that of a visitor. This would create an imbalance in the importance of each role.
- Positioning service users to engage in policy-based activities (such as informing the development of standards and where thresholds are) should over time be embedded into the remit of a service user forum planned for establishment to support all four areas of regulation (standards, education, registration, fitness to practice).

Conclusion

The draft principles seemingly provide a suitable framework to progress the Committee's thinking and intent around this topic. Subject to the outcomes of further discussions, we propose to embed further review of these principles within the pilot activity scheduled for January 2021. This is an ideal opportunity to test the real-world applications of these principles based on feedback from service users, visitors and education providers.

Appendix 1

Competence Framework for Expert advisors to Visitors

Purpose of role

Expert advisors are appointed where necessary and beneficial to support and inform visitors regarding particular areas of the standards. This will commonly be in relation to emerging areas of practice for particular professions and in relation to service user involvement.

Competency heading	Visitors
Specific Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding <u>of new and emerging areas of relevance</u> within their area of expertise of new and emerging areas of practice within a relating to HCPC regulated professions. • Keeps up-to-date with any new developments relevant to new and emerging areas of practice <u>their area of expertise</u>.
Analytical ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within their area of expertise, is able to identify evidence learning outcomes to ensure the relevant proficiency <u>or education</u> standards have been demonstrated at a threshold level.
Interpersonal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises and deals appropriately with actual or potential conflicts of interest. • Explains and justifies advice when presenting work to a visitor and / or HCPC executive. • Demonstrates openness to feedback and constructive challenge.
Decision making and sound judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers a wide range of issues to provide informed, independent, and sound advice, ensuring the relevant proficiency <u>or education</u> standards have been demonstrated at a threshold level.
Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopts a clear and succinct oral and written communication style and seeks clarification where necessary. • Delivers work within the set timelines.