

Fitness to Practise Committee, 14 February 2013

Complaints update

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The Assurance and Development team are responsible for logging and co-ordinating the investigation of complaints about Fitness to Practise cases. This paper describes the activity since June 2012, and highlights the analysis of the types of complaints and how this information is included in the programme of quality improvement.

Decision

This paper is for note, no decision is required.

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Appendices

Note

Date of paper

04 February 2013

Fitness to Practise Committee, February 2013

Complaints update

1. Background

- 1.1 In common with other departments in HCPC, Fitness to Practise receives feedback and complaints regarding aspects of the work it carries out. This is received from a range of stakeholders involved in the process, including registrants about whom the complaint was made, the person who raised the complaint, witnesses, or someone acting on behalf of one of these parties, including legal representatives or members of Parliament.
- 1.2 Complaints cover a wide range of issues, including the process of investigating cases and presenting evidence in front of a panel, customer service issues such as time taken to respond to queries, or the quality of response, or disagreement with decisions made by HCPC. These complaints may arrive during the case management process or after the case has closed.
- 1.3 A process for managing the complaints in a consistent way has been developed with the Operations team. The Assurance and Development (A+D) team co-ordinates the responses to complaints, liaising with team members as appropriate.

2 Identifying complaints and possible complaints

- 2.1 There are a range of routes to complain into the organisation. These include: direct correspondence to the Chief Executive or Chair; electronically to the Director of Operations via the feedback form on the HCPC website; direct correspondence to the Director of Fitness to Practise; or as part of routine case correspondence with the Case Manager or Hearings team.
- 2.2 In order to ensure that each complaint is captured and appropriately responded to, a process has been designed to log and acknowledge receipt of complaints, irrespective of their route in to the organisation. This ensures that we capture the whole picture of complaints, and also respond to them appropriately, and in the timescale set out in HCPC's service standards for responding to complaints

- 2.3 The Operations team produce a monthly report on customer service feedback issues, and the A+D team liaise with them during the handling of the response. A weekly meeting to review progress and analyse the complaints is in place to assist this, attended by Director of Operations, Head of Assurance and Development and team members who log and record the complaints. This assists in defining customer service complaints, and identifying whether there are trends in the feedback.

3. Sharing complaints processing information

- 3.1 In order to ensure that complaints information is shared amongst the senior managers in FtP, a weekly report of complaints activity is produced. This covers the newly received complaints, those responded to within the week, and also those that remain as open investigations.
- 3.2 This report helps to manage resources of key FtP team members, raises awareness of complaints activity, highlights specific cases or issues, and ensures that responses are being made within service standards. The Head of Assurance and Development also does a verbal report at the weekly scheduled Heads of meeting. A detailed summary of the complaints is included in the monthly management statistics.
- 3.3 The detail of the number and types of complaint is also included in the monthly report to the Executive Management Team, compiled by the Operations team.

4 Performance and Response times

- 4.1 HCPC has service response times which are publicised on the website. The current standard is 15 working days or sooner for a response. If a response is not possible within this timeframe, an update letter is to be sent.
- 4.2 Analysis of current performance has shown a large improvement since June 2012. Mean and median response times in working days are calculated. In the period from 8 June 2012 to date, the mean and median response times were 12 and 8 days respectively. Since October 2012 to date, the mean and median data is 7.1 and 6 respectively.
- 4.3 This means that the timeliness of response has improved, and there are more consistent response times. The current response time since October is less than half of the HCPC's response time of 15 days.

- 4.4 16 cases fell outside of the standard service time responses. A process for notifying complainant when this happens is in place, and depends on the complexity of the investigation.
- 4.5 One case was not recorded on receipt, resulting in a near miss analysis carried out by the Operations team. At the point of the near miss being called, we had revised the process of logging and responding to complaints and no further adverse events have occurred since. The weekly monitoring and monthly reporting provide the necessary checks to highlight any potential problems.

5 Resources

- 5.1 Responding to complaints can be a time and resource intensive process. Within FtP, the main requirement is to investigate the nature of the case that led to the complaint. Unless there has been previous involvement in correspondence with the complainant, the Investigation Manager responsible for the team that handled the case will perform this investigation.
- 5.2 The weekly report of received and outstanding complaints helps to manage the resources required and to ensure that other team members can be brought in to assist in complaints responses at busy times.

6 GSCC complaints

- 6.1 There have been a number of complaints regarding decisions taken, or relating to the process of investigating, GSCC cases. At the point of transfer in August 2012, HCPC received only limited information regarding the background of closed cases, and is therefore unable to reopen or review the decisions. HCPC has responded to these complaints by inviting the complainant to submit any new information to HCPC for assessment as a new case, or to complain to the Department of Health about the GSCC.

7 Analysis of numbers and themes

Since 8 June 2012, we have received 63 formal complaints, plus 3 ICP decision complaints.

3 positive feedback letters received, relating to good customer service and responsiveness.

Nature of complaint	Number	%
Contested allegation	1	1.5
Poor customer service	22	33.3
Data accuracy	1	1.5
Contested HCPC decision	24	36.3
Contested GSCC decision	4	6.0
Questioning veracity of evidence	1	1.5
Requesting assistance with healthcare problem (outside of HCPC role)	1	1.5
FtP process issues	7	10.6
Registration issue	1	1.5
Requesting costs	1	1.5
Treatment during hearing	1	1.5
Website entry/publication	2	3.0
	66	100.0

8 Future developments

8.1 The activities planned around this area for the coming year include:

- Continue to monitor complaints in the manner described, and to work with colleagues in other departments to analyse trends
- Include analysis of complaints trends in the refresher training for FtP team members to ensure that they understand the process of identifying complaints, and that future issues can be avoided
- Review processes and systems, as well as information to parties involved in cases, in light of the analysis of complaints
- Conduct thematic reviews of complaints in March and October 2013.