

CONFIRMED

The Health Professions Council

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MINUTES of the twenty-second meeting of the Health Committee held at **1.30 pm on Wednesday 17 September 2008** at Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

Present

Professor T Hazell (Chairman)

Mr O Altay

Mrs P Blackburn

Mr P Douglas

Dr S Khan

Mrs J Pearce

Mr N Willis

In attendance:

Mr C Bendall, Secretary to Committees

Item 1.08/31 Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Drayton and Professor A Turner.

Item 2.08/32 Approval of agenda

- 2.1 The Committee approved the agenda.

Item 3.08/33 Minutes of the Committee 23 April 2008

- 3.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the 21st meeting of the Health Committee should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 4.08/34 Matters arising

- 4.1 The Committee noted the action points arising from the last meeting, which had also been noted at the Fitness to Practise Forum held earlier that day.

Item 5.08/35 Chairman's report

- 5.1 The Chairman reported that he and the Director of Fitness to Practise had recently visited Royal Blackburn Hospital. The visit had included observing Dr Khan at work, meeting his colleagues and visiting the hospital's impressive education facilities. The visit had been part of the HPC's work to engage more closely with non-Council committee members such as Dr Khan. The visit had also helped to raise awareness of HPC at the hospital.

Item 6.08/36 Director of Fitness to Practise report

- 6.1 The Committee received a report on the work of the Fitness to Practise Department, which had been received at the Fitness to Practise Forum.
- 6.2 The Committee noted the report.

Item 7.08/37 Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) review of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (and HPC performance review)

- 7.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive. The Committee noted that the Fitness to Practise Forum had discussed the paper and had recommended the actions listed at paragraph 7.2 of these minutes.
- 7.2 The Committee agreed to recommend the following actions to Council for prioritisation:
- (1) that the Executive continue to take forward recommendations from within the CHRE report to develop:
 - systems for the assessment, appraisal and reappointment of HPC panel members;
 - updating the register so that the conditions of practice were attached to individual registrants' entries;
 - (2) that the Executive continue to gather and evaluate data on timescales of cases, and that this data periodically be presented to fitness to practise committees;
 - (3) that the Executive continue to give emphasis on the collection and evaluation of data.

Action: KJ (ongoing)

Item 8.08/38 External review of complaints literature

- 8.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive. The Committee noted that the Fitness to Practise Forum had discussed the paper and had recommended the action at paragraph 8.2 of these minutes.
- 8.2 The Committee agreed that the Executive should take decisions for further work as a result of the conclusions of the research into external complaints.

Action: KJ (ongoing)

Item 9.08/39 Abusive, frivolous and vexatious complaints

- 9.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion and approval from the Executive. The Committee noted that the Fitness to Practise Forum had discussed the paper and had recommended the decisions listed at paragraph 9.2 of these minutes.
- 9.2 The Committee agreed to:
 - (1) approve the policy set out in the paper
 - (2) pass the following resolution:

“That the Director of Fitness to Practise be authorised to exercise the power of the Committee to take no further action in respect of any complaint which, in the reasonable opinion of the Director, is frivolous or vexatious. The exercise of this power shall be subject to any policy which has been approved by the Committee on the management of such complaints. In the Director’s absence, this power may be exercised by a person nominated by the Director.”

Action: KJ (ongoing)

Item 10.08/40 Handling and purchase of religious books

- 10.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive. The Committee noted that the Fitness to Practise Forum had discussed the paper and had recommended the actions at paragraph 10.2 of these minutes.
- 10.2 The Committee approved the following recommendations:
 - HPC to follow the practices of the Courts within its own hearings process;
 - HPC to have copies of the most common scriptures as they are most likely to be requested by registrants and witnesses attending FTP hearings. FTP already holds several Holy Scriptures of different faiths;

- Hearings Officers to become familiar with how to handle various scriptures, to ensure no offence is taken when administering the oath;
- HPC to have copies of the various wordings of the different oaths to be administered according to their scriptures and how these oaths are to be administered; and
- Notices of hearings should include a statement requesting registrants or witnesses to indicate if they have any preference for a particular holy scripture and further advise them to bring a copy of this scripture to the hearing if their choice is not available.

Action: AA (ongoing)

Item 11.08/41 Cross examination in cases of a sexual nature

- 11.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion from the Executive. The Committee noted that the Fitness to Practise Forum had discussed the paper and recommended the action at paragraph 11.2 of these minutes.
- 11.2 The Committee agreed to approve the practice note.

Action: KJ (ongoing)

The Committee noted the following papers, which had also been noted by the Fitness to Practise Forum:

Item 12.08/42 Workplan update

Item 13.08/43 Operational guidance

Item 14.08/44 Service standards

Item 15.08/45 Report on Partner Training

Item 16.08/46 Feedback from Panel Chairs and members

Item 17.08/47 Any other business

- 17.1 The Committee noted that the Chairs' Liaison Group (which comprised the chairmen of all the HPC's committees) was due to meet on 1 October 2008 and that the Chairman was due to attend the meeting.
- 17.2 The Committee noted that the Executive would review whether it would be possible to hold the Fitness to Practise Forum concurrently with the meetings of the Conduct and Competence, Health and Investigating

Committees, as this might be a more pragmatic alternative to the current arrangements.

- 17.3 The Committee noted that the annual meeting of the Fitness to Practise Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen had not been held in 2008. The Committee asked the Executive to make the necessary arrangements for the meeting as required.

Action: SR (ongoing)

- 17.4 The Committee noted that it was likely that there would be insufficient business for the meeting due to be held on 7 November 2008. A decision on whether to cancel that meeting would be made as soon as possible.

Item 18.08/48 Dates of 2008-9 Health Committee meetings

- 18.1 Health Committees would be held on:

Friday 7 November 2008, 11.00am
Thursday 5 February 2009, 11.00 am
Friday 24 April 2009, 10.30 am (Fitness to Practise Forum)

Chair

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Date

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