
Fitness to Practise Forum 17 September 2008

Fitness to Practise Service Standards

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This paper is intended to update the forum on the work that has recently taken place within the Fitness to Practice Department to review the service level standards that are applied to the four functions for which it is responsible (fitness to practise, registration appeals, protection of title and health and character). These standards will shortly be applied within the department.

The Fitness to Practise Department handles a large volume of correspondence, emails and phone calls across its four functions. Hearings Officers, Case Managers and Case Officers also regularly meet with registrants, applicants and complainants who are involved in these processes.

As the department has grown it has become increasingly important to ensure consistency across the team, and ensure that everyone who comes into contact with the department is afforded the same level of service. It is also important that individuals outside the organisation know what they should expect from the department. The service standards must be achievable and realistic and consideration has been given to this. Monitoring will take place internally to ensure that the team is meeting and is able to meet the standards.

The areas that are covered in the standards are:

- Initial acknowledgement of cases
- Responding to phone messages
- Notifying the registrant of an allegation and panel decisions
- Updating complaints and registrants of the progress of the case

Five documents have been produced in total, one for general queries and one for each of the four functions for which the department is responsible. This is necessary due to the difference between the four areas of work. It is intended that the standards will be available on the relevant pages of the website, rather than in one central place to ensure that members of the public are easily directed to the appropriate document.

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2008-08-20	a	F2P	AGD	Fitness to Practise Operating Guidance	Final DD: None	Public RD: None

Decision

This paper is for information only. No decision is required.

Background information

Service standards are common in many public sector and private organisations. CHRE's Standards of good regulation refer to regulators having service standards or similar within their fitness to practise department to monitor its performance.

The recent CHRE performance review highlights good customer service and service standards as an area of good practice at the GDC. Although no specific comments were made in relation to HPC, suggestions for improvement were made in relation to two other regulators in the area of producing formal service standards.

The performance of HPC's FTP Department is currently monitored in a variety of ways. Lead Case Managers have monthly case meetings with their team members to discuss the progress of all cases. Regular reports are produced to identify cases that have not had action taken in the past four weeks. Monthly reports are run to monitor and identify cases that are over 5 months old and also the time it has taken cases to reach certain points in the process.

Resource implications

Employee time in monitoring the standards

Financial implications

None

Appendices

- Fitness to Practise Department Service Standards – General Enquiries
- Fitness to Practise Department Service Standards – Fitness to Practise Complaints
- Health and Character Declaration Service Standards
- Registration Appeals Service Standards
- Protection of Title Service Standards

Date of paper

28 August 2008

FITNESS TO PRACTISE DEPARTMENT SERVICE STANDARDS - GENERAL ENQUIRIES

1. Contacting the Fitness to Practise Team

- 1.1. The Fitness to Practise Team is generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814

Free phone: 0800 328 4218

Fax: 020 7582 4874

Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

- 1.2. We aim to fully respond to general enquiries made in the form of letters and emails within 10 working days. However, if the query is complex, a full response may take longer.
- 1.3. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible a message facility will be available to the caller. We will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.4. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.5. Everyone will be dealt with in fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.6. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

2. Communication of information

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. We will take reasonable steps to enable anyone to make a complaint or allegation, and to assist those with accessibility or literacy difficulties. We can take a statement of complaint over the telephone. Please see our "How to make a complaint" brochure for further information.

- 2.3. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities to ensure access to the complaints process where required.
- 2.4. Due to the nature of the work undertaken by the Fitness to Practise Department, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

**FITNESS TO PRACTISE DEPARTMENT SERVICE STANDARDS –
FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMPLAINTS**

1. Contacting the Fitness to Practise Team

- 1.1. The Fitness to Practise Team is generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814
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Fax: 020 7582 4874
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,
SE11 4BU.

Contact names: Zoe Maguire (Case Team 1), Russell Brown (Case
Team 2)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
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- 2.4. Due to the nature of the work undertaken by the Fitness to Practise Department, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

3. Complainants

- 3.1. Allegations are assessed on receipt and where there may be an immediate risk to the public or registrant concerned, contact will be made with the complainant between 1 and 3 working days from receipt of the allegation. This will be either in writing, by email or telephone.

In all other cases we aim to acknowledge receipt of the allegation in writing and inform you of the next steps in the investigations process within 10 working days of receipt.

- 3.2. Each allegation is assigned to a member of the team who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of that team member will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with any questions. If the Case Manager changes, we will notify you.
- 3.3. We will keep complainants informed of the progress of the case. This is achieved by ensuring that there is contact with the complainant by either by letter, email or telephone.

4. Witnesses

- 4.1. Where it is necessary for us or our solicitors to obtain a witness statement from a complainant or other relevant person, this will be arranged at a convenient time and in a suitable environment.
- 4.2. If a witness is required to attend the final hearing, we will contact them with the details of this. They will be provided with a witness pack containing useful information and the direct contact details of a person in the team that they can contact with questions.
- 4.3. After a hearing, the complaint and all witnesses will be informed of the outcome.

5. Registrants

- 5.1. Each allegation is assigned to a member of the team who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of that team member will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions. If the Case Manager changes, we will notify you.

- 5.2. We will keep registrants informed of the progress of the case. This is achieved by ensuring that there is regular contact with the registrant by either by letter, email or telephone.
- 5.3. The Registrant will be notified of the Investigating Committee Panel's within 5 working days of the decision.

HEALTH AND CHARACTER DECLARATION SERVICE STANDARDS

1. General standards for contacting the Fitness to Practise Team

- 1.1. The Fitness to Practise Team is generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814
Free phone: 0800 328 4218
Fax: 020 7582 4874
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,
SE11 4BU.

Contact name: Paul Robson (Case Team, 3)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.4. Everyone will be dealt with in fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.5. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

2. Communication of information

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities where required.
- 2.3. Due to the nature of the work undertaken by the Fitness to Practise Department, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

3. Case Management

- 3.1. We aim to acknowledge a health and character declaration in writing within 5 working days of it reaching this department and provide information about the next steps in the process.
- 3.2. Each declaration is assigned to a member of the team who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of that team member will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions.
- 3.3. Declarations on application to the register
We aim to process any health and character declaration that is made on application to the register as quickly as possible, in order to minimise any delay in registration. A panel can usually consider these cases within 1 month.
- 3.4. Self referrals by registrants
We will keep the registrant informed of the progress of any further investigations we make.

REGISTRATION APPEALS SERVICE STANDARDS

1. Contacting the Registration Appeals Team

- 1.1. Registrations appeals are managed by a team of Case Officers within the Fitness to Practise Department. The Case Officers are generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814
Free phone: 0800 328 4218
Fax: 020 7582 4874
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,
SE11 4BU.

Contact name: Paul Robson (Case Team, 3)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.4. Everyone will be dealt with in a fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.5. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

2. Communication of information

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities where required.

- 2.3. Due to the nature of Registration Appeals process, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

3. Case Management

- 3.1. We aim to acknowledge an appeal in writing and tell the appellant what will happen next within 10 working days of receipt.
- 3.2. Each appeal is assigned to a Case Officer who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of the Case Officer will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions. You will be notified if the Case Officer changes.
- 3.3. We aim to hear each appeal within 6 months of receipt. However, in some cases it may take longer e.g. where there is a health or character issue that requires investigation.
- 3.4. We ask that appellants assist us by providing any information that is requested promptly and in the form required.

PROTECTION OF TITLE SERVICE STANDARDS

1. Contacting the Protection of Title Team

- 1.1. Protection of title complaints are managed by a team of Case Officers within the Fitness to Practise Department. The team are generally available between 9am and 5pm, Monday - Friday. The team can be contacted by post, email, telephone and fax. Our details are as follows:

Telephone: 020 7840 9814
Free phone: 0800 328 4218
Fax: 020 7582 4874
Email: ftp@hpc-uk.org

Address: Health Professions Council, Fitness to Practise,
Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London,
SE11 4BU.

Contact name: Paul Robson (Case Team, 3)

- 1.2. We aim to answer phone calls promptly, however where this is not possible we will respond to phone messages at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3. Members of the team will be courteous and polite and the same is expected of those who come into contact with the Fitness to Practise Department. Where individuals become rude or abusive to HPC employees, steps may be taken to limit contact to written correspondence only.
- 1.4. Everyone will be dealt with in a fair and objective way, which is free from discrimination.
- 1.5. We welcome constructive feedback on the way in which we implement the fitness to practise process.

2. Communication of information

- 2.1. We aim to provide clear, straightforward information to everyone.
- 2.2. When requested we will arrange for information to be produced in different formats such as Braille, Large Print and other formats. We can also provide an interpreter or other appropriate facilities where required.
- 2.3. Due to the nature of Protection of Title process, there are sometimes complex legal and professional issues involved. We aim to clearly set

out and explain these without the use of jargon and abbreviations that are not commonly known.

4. Case Management

- 4.1. We aim to acknowledge a protection of title enquiry in writing within 10 working days of receipt, and provide information of the next steps in the process.
- 4.2. Each case is assigned to a Case Officer who will be responsible for the case until its conclusion. The direct contact details of the Case Officer will be provided to ensure that they can be contacted with questions. You will be notified if the Case Officer changes.
- 4.3. It may not be possible to keep a complainant fully informed of the progress of the case due to potential criminal proceedings.