

**Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics  
Professional Liaison Group (PLG)**

**Public minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics Professional Liaison Group (PLG) held as follows:-**

**Date:** Monday 2 June 2014

**Time:** 2pm

**Venue:** Avonmouth House, 6 Avonmouth Street, London, SE1 6NX

**Present:** Elaine Brookes (PLG Chair)  
Mary Clark-Glass  
Sheila Drayton  
Anna Gupta  
Steve McNeice  
Dreengah Lyle  
Henny Pearmain  
Helga Pile  
Nanik Pursani  
Joy Tweed  
Steve Wordsworth

**In attendance:**

Claire Amor, Secretary to the Group  
Nicole Casey, Policy Manager  
Selma Elgaziari, Policy Officer  
Michael Guthrie, Director of Policy and Standards,  
Anna van der Gaag, Chair of Council

## **Item 1. Welcome and Introductions**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (SCPE) Professional Liaison Group (PLG).
- 1.2 Members of the PLG were given the opportunity to introduce themselves.

## **Item 2. Apologies for absence**

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Caroline Waterfield.

## **Item 3. Approval of agenda**

- 3.1 The PLG approved the agenda.

## **Item 4. Presentation to introduce HCPC and the work of the PLG**

- 4.1 The PLG received a presentation from the Policy Officer. The presentation covered the following areas:-
  - the context of the work of the PLG;
  - the background to the HCPC and HCPC's key processes;
  - the different standards produced by HCPC and their relationship with each other;
  - the work of the PLG and timetable; and
  - the subsequent steps once the work of the PLG had been completed.
- 4.2 The PLG noted the content of the presentation.

## **Item 5. Chair overview**

- 5.1 The Chair provided an overview of the aims of the PLG.
- 5.2 The PLG discussed the range of experience within the group. It was noted that debate was welcomed but that a consensus would need to be reached to revise the standards effectively.
- 5.3 The PLG noted that the revised SCPE would likely be in place for a number of years and for that reason it was necessary to set them at a high level so as not to prematurely date them.

5.4 The PLG discussed individual member representation. It was noted that PLG members were part of the group due to their own experience and expertise and not as elected representatives of specific groups. Members noted that peer consultation and discussion between meetings was welcome.

**Item 6. Background and context of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (report ref:- PLG 01/14)**

6.1 The PLG received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer.

6.2 The PLG noted that the SCPE set out the broad and overarching principles conduct the HCPC expects of registrants, and provide guidance about these expectations. The standards provide an ethical framework and have a number of operational uses.

6.3 The PLG noted the following points:-

- the creation and maintenance of SCPE is a statutory requirement of the HCPC;
- SCPE apply to all the HCPC's 16 professions, they do not go into profession specific detail; and
- SCPE are linked to a number of other sets of HCPC standards and guidance, as well as guidance and policies produced professional bodies and employers.

6.4 During the course of discussion, the following points were made:-

- ethical values are set out in the NHS constitution and this could be of use in reviewing the standards. It was agreed that the respective equivalents for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should also be reviewed to inform the review;
- SCPE student guidance 'interprets' the standards for students to apply in their placements and studies. This guidance will require revision if the standards are revised; and
- the Standards of Education and Training require education providers to include SCPE in programmes. In addition Universities have their own fitness to practise processes and students are recruited to a value set.

6.5 The PLG noted the paper.

## **Item 7. Overview of research for the review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (report ref:- PLG 02/14)**

- 7.1 The PLG received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer.
- 7.2 The PLG noted the following points:-
- the first stage of the review of SCPE focused on research with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the review is evidence informed;
  - the research period included a combination of internal and external research activities to seek the views of key stakeholders, including registrants and employers;
  - research included work with service user organisations and charities to explore the expectations service users and their carers have of health and care professionals; and
  - the HCPC Executive have summarised the findings of the research into eight main themes, which are to be discussed by PLG at its future meetings. These themes are;
    - Reporting concerns and dealing with mistakes
    - Social media
    - Collaborative approach to care
    - Infection and risk control
    - Inter-professional working
    - Professional conduct
    - Leadership and managerial accountability
    - Format and accessibility of standards.
- 7.3 The PLG noted subtleties around language existed for each profession, for example in children's social work, health based standards were not as appropriate, and service user identity was a sensitive issue.
- 7.4 In response to a question it was noted that where feedback did not fall into the main 8 themes, it was straightforward and would be amended as it was considered non-contentious.
- 7.5 The PLG agreed that the language of standard one, requiring registrants to act in the 'best interests' of a service user raises capacity issues.
- 7.6 The PLG discussed the care work force. The PLG agreed that formal care workers should be included in the consultation on the revised standards, as service users in formal care settings often are without family support and it is important that this group is represented.
- 7.7 The PLG noted the paper.

## **Item 8. Review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics: Social media (report ref:- PLG 03/14)**

8.1 The PLG received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer.

8.2 The PLG noted the following points:-

- the HCPC recognise social media to be a useful way of communicating and sharing information;
- the HCPC have received a number of fitness to practise complaints related to a registrant's use of social media;
- SCPE do not currently refer to social media. However, the standards cover a number of principles the HCPC would expect registrants to apply to their use of social media; and
- the HCPC do not currently produce any formal guidance on the specific issue of social media. Formal guidance on confidentiality has been produced which is relevant to the use of social media in practice.

8.3 During the course of discussion, the following points were made:-

- increased publicity due to social media about registrants' behaviours could damage a profession more significantly than before;
- the use of social media should be reinforced at training level and the HCPC should audit for this inclusion;
- the PLG discussed approaches to social media in other regulators standards. It was felt that the standards or guidance in this area should not be spread amongst all standards and should be clear and focused and easy to access. However signposting to specific guidance should be included;
- the longevity of the standards may be impacted on by a reference to social media which is a changeable and developing technology. specific references to this issue would be contrary to the broad, overarching nature of the existing standards;
- the use of social media does not introduce new ethical considerations for registrants, but instead requires the application of already existing principles to a new area of practice;
- standard 3 could be expanded upon to clarify its relevance to all personal, professional, real and virtual situations; and

- SCPE should remain strategic and high level, with accompanying guidance which could be more regularly updated to keep up with technology changes. Case studies could be used to make the guidance more accessible.
- 8.4 The PLG agreed that social media was too important to not be included in the standards in some way but concluded that it was not necessary to introduce a specific standard on this issue. The PLG considered that the standards would benefit from a more general reference to a range of public facing mechanisms, face-to-face or online - particularly in relation to standard 3 about keeping high standards of personal conduct.
- 8.5 The PLG agreed that the Executive should consider revising the standards in line with these recommended principles, for the group to consider further at its third meeting.
- 8.6 The PLG noted the paper.

**Item 9. Review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics:  
Collaborative approaches to care (report ref:- PLG 04/14)**

- 9.1 The PLG received a paper for discussion from the Policy Officer.
- 9.2 The PLG noted that the topic of collaborative approaches to care was identified as a key theme, which includes the involvement of service users in their care and individualised care.
- 9.3 The PLG noted the following points:-
- the 2007 white paper 'Putting People First' was designed to give people more choice, independence and control through personalised services, including in health and social care;
  - increased focus on care as a partnership is evidenced in standards, guidance, policies and procedures throughout the sector;
  - recently, high profile failures of care have highlighted inadequacies in standardised pathways of care and a person-centred approach has been underpinned in the drive to integrate health and social care services; and
  - SCPE currently prioritise care in the best interests of service users. References to working in partnership with patients are also included in various other HCPC standards.
- 9.4 During the course of discussion, the following points were made:-

- the PLG discussed paragraph 5.3 of the report. It was noted that the Francis recommendation in this area focused on Nurses, but that it should be relevant to HCPC registrants;
- the PLG discussed table 6.1 in the report which provided an outline of the approaches of other health and care regulators in the UK in covering these issues in their respective sets of standards. The PLG agreed that the language used in the Code of Practice of the care council's in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland encapsulated the issue of partnership and empowerment best, with the inclusion of reference to a support framework;
- communicating with some service users can be difficult, registrants should take 'reasonable steps' to communicate effectively and should involve carers and those around the service user where appropriate;
- the PLG agreed that the current SCPE do not address service user control. It was agreed that this should be addressed, but that clarity is needed on long term and short term service users and what level of control is appropriate in both circumstances. It was noted that capacity can prevent a service user taking control of their care and so the qualifying 'where appropriate' should be used;
- the requirement for understanding and informed choice can also be prevented by capacity in some cases and again carers should be utilised by registrants to facilitate this where possible; and
- language testing is not currently undertaken by the HCPC, it is an employer's responsibility to ensure employees can communicate effectively. The standards are concerned with high level communication and not language requirements.

9.5 The PLG agreed the current principles already included in the standard and considered that these principles may be strengthened by changing the format of the standards to bullet points. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the PLG's next meeting when considering format and accessibility of the standards.

9.6 The PLG recommended that a number of further principles be included in the standards based on the principles identified by the Executive as not currently included in the standards and the standards of other regulators, including:

- registrants must treat service users as individuals;
- they must listen to service user's needs and wishes;
- they must check service users' understanding of their care;

- they must communicate with those who know the service users well;
- they should empower and support service users to maintain their health and wellbeing; and
- make informed decisions about their health and social care.

9.7 The PLG noted the paper and agreed to review a revised draft of the SCPE at its third meeting.

**Item 10. Professional Liaison Group work plan (report ref:- PLG 05/14)**

**Item 11. Connect research report (report ref:- PLG 06/14)**

**Item 12. Shaping Our Lives research report (report ref:- PLG 07/14)**

**Item 13. Any other business**

13.1 There was no other business.

**Item 14. Dates of subsequent meetings**

14.1 28 July 2014, 19 September 2014, 9 November 2014 and 16 December 2014. All meetings to start at 10:30 am and to be held at HCPC, Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

**Chair**

**Date**