

Agenda Item 5

Enclosure 3

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REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

**UK Registration Department –
Best Practice Development**

From : the Executive

FOR DISCUSSION



Executive Summary

Produced for: Registration Committee
Produced by: Claire Harkin, Manager UK Registration
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This paper details changes that have been made within the UK Registration Department as part of *Best Practise Development*. *Best Practise Development* is the name given to collectively describe several projects and changes that have been made (and will be made) to improve the service to our two client groups, registrants and members of the public.

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Best Practice Development Explanation

Introduction

The HPC commissioned the Opinion Leader Research group to undertake research which could be used to develop recommendations and set a benchmark for the new systems of interface. The primary objective of the research was to gauge levels of satisfaction amongst those using the existing system.

The findings clearly indicated that there was a need for the UK Registration Department to extend its availability and change some of its procedures.

This paper is intended to explain how we have accomplished this, how the necessary changes were implemented and managed and to outline some of the benefits that we have seen as a result.

UK Registration Explanation

What are UK Registration Officers responsible for?

It may be helpful at the outset to explain the role of a UK Registration Officer.

This is a varied and extremely important role and the department is often referred to as the "engine room". Without them the HPC could not function effectively.

First impressions are important and UK Registration Officers are very often the first point of call for applicants and registrants. They must therefore ensure that they have an excellent knowledge of the service that we provide and remain polite and professional at all times.

They have a busy and stressful job and must ensure that they are well organised and work as a team.

Their responsibilities include:

- Accurately maintaining the registers
- Processing all types of payment receipts
- Processing all UK applications
- All data entry
- Dealing with and answering all correspondence relating to UK applications and registration
- Dealing with all telephone calls relating to UK applications and registration

The team answered 29,281 telephone calls, processed 5,454 application forms between July and December 2002. They generate approximately 3 thousand letters each month and make around 5 thousand amendments to registrants details.

How do you get everything done?

A departmental rota ensures that all the essential business is dealt with on a daily basis. The rota was introduced in November 2002 and is still in its early stages.

It is important to the team that their roles are varied and the rota helps to ensure this. It also helps us to:

- Ensure there are always enough officers available to receive as many incoming telephone calls as we possibly can, especially during the morning and lunchtime periods.
- Ensure there are always officers available for the early and late start/finish.
- Plan and prioritise workload.
- Organise cover for those on sick or annual leave.
- Fairness to all-officers.

Communication is very important since the team work so closely with each other. Given the huge workload, it is very often difficult to find the time to share information or discuss problems. It has never been so important as it is now with so many changes afoot both within the department and the organisation as a whole.

The team holds twice monthly informal hour-long meetings within the department on Friday afternoons. This time is used to generally wind down, catch up with each other and to air problems, issues and concerns. The team continues to answer incoming telephone calls during this time.

Team meetings and one2one's are normally held once every 4-6 weeks.

New Telephone System - July 2002

Installation of Mitel 6100 telephone system

This was introduced in July 2002. Universal Telecommunications provided training for all members HPC staff. Key members of staff were provided with additional training and are known as "super-users". These individuals provide support to other staff internally.

The new system was particularly well received by the UK team and has enabled us to better understand the flow and volume of calls received. It has provided us with an extra 10 channels, totaling 30 incoming lines to the organization thus giving the outside world improved access to the department. It has also helped us to identify our peak times.

How has the new system helped so far?

The normal hours for telephone availability prior to November 2002 was 9.30am-4.30pm. Previous research indicated that registrants expressed a desire to be able to contact the department by telephone out-side these hours.

Until the introduction of the new system, we had little idea of the actual number of calls we were dealing with or when our peak times were. The system provides an extremely useful reporting tool and through this it quickly became clear there was not enough staff to answer all incoming calls, especially at certain times of the day.

The HPC now employs a part-time person to deal with all incoming mail. Previously, this had been the responsibility of two members of the UK Registration team which meant that our availability for incoming telephone calls during the morning period was severely restricted. The extra staff enabled the team to better manage the volume of telephones calls received during this peak time.

Further investigations post installation showed clear evidence of a substantial number of callers attempting to reach us outside these hours. For a period of two weeks at the beginning of September 2002, 619 calls were received between 8.30-9.30am and 170 between 4.30-5.30pm.

We also had no idea as to how many calls were being lost. In August 2002 4,303 calls were received, 439 of these were abandoned. This information gave us the foundation we needed to be able to begin to plan improvements for the department and it's procedures and to recruit new staff.

Although the number of calls received has increased steadily, the number of abandoned calls has been significantly reduced.

What are the benefits for:

The Team - Are now able to manage their time more effectively as they have an improved knowledge of the peaks and troughs. They receive monthly stats, which indicate both personal and team performance together with helpful figures relating to the flow and volume of calls being received by the team. Not only does this assist greatly in the management of this particular area, it also enables individuals to easily identify problem areas and helps them to contribute to team discussions as to ways further improvements can be made.

The Organisation - More calls are getting through which means less complaints and the length of time taken to answer calls is substantially lower than it was prior to July 2002. Installation of the new system has enabled other departments within the organisation to think about their telephone handling procedures. The automated service, which can be accessed through the main HPC number, allows the caller to access the relevant department/individual quickly and has greatly reduced the number of calls coming through the switchboard.

The Public/Registrants/Applicants - We have received many positive comments from registrants and organisations. Callers are particularly pleased at being able to dial the department direct rather than having to go through the switchboard or the auto-attendant.

A meeting was held between Claire Harkin (HPC Registration Manager, UK) and Ian Driver, Registration Manager of the General Dental Council and some of his team in September last year. Mr Driver was keen to learn more of our procedures in order to make improvements and was particularly impressed with our telephone system.

Lo-Call Telephone Number - 9 December 2002

The HPC launched this at the feedback event held in Cardiff on the 9 December 2002. Calls to this number are charged at local rate if dialing from anywhere within the United Kingdom. The usual direct dial number is still operational. Usage will be monitored and regular reports will be available.

Credit/Debit Card Processing - June 2002

In June 2002 the UK Registration Department introduced credit/debit card receipt processing. This was long overdue and has been extremely well received by the team and registrants, especially those residing overseas. No disruption has been caused to our current receipt processing procedures.

The procedure is simple and each member of the team actively promotes this new method of payment as an option for callers. The number of receipts continues to rise each month. It is especially useful at the end of a professional year for those who would normally find themselves with no option but to apply for restoration. It has and will continue to reduce staff time and processing costs.

There are currently three machines in use; two within the UK registration department and one at reception. No other members of staff are trained to use these machines, but it is hoped that both International and Grand-parenting Registration Officers will accept and process payment receipts in the near future.

Further improvements have recently been made such as electronically recording receipt data, which is hoped to assist both the UK team and the Finance Department. We hope that not only will this help to ensure more accurate recording of payment receipt details, it will allow queries to be dealt with more speedily and efficiently.

Registration Managers and Finance are currently looking into other methods of payments.

Integration of Evening Shift to Day Shift – 1 November 2002

Why was the evening shift created?

The evening shift was created in May 2001 to assist the UK Registration team with the processing of payment receipts during a particularly busy period. At that time the department was only contactable by telephone during the hours of 2pm - 4pm because of the pressure of work on the current staff. The CPSM had taken on three new professions consisting of approximately ten thousand new registrants in the previous year. These inevitably generated a high volume of additional work for the team. Due to the constraints of space, it was not possible to appoint extra staff to the daytime team. Overtime was being undertaken, but this did not significantly reduce the workload and added extra pressure to existing staff. Letters of complaint besieged the then Registrar and it was decided that the only solution was to extend working hours by having an evening shift, thus allowing the daytime staff to extend their availability for telephone enquiries.

How long was it due to run?

The evening shift was initially thought to run for a 12-month period.

Why did it run over?

The introduction of the HPC in April 2002, generated a high volume of additional enquiries from registrants in relation to their continued State Registration. The first point of call for registrants is very often the UK Registration Department, so the team found that they were inundated with phone calls and paperwork.

Additionally, major projects were being worked on during this period. It was decided to retain the evening shift until they were complete and implemented. This would ensure that the team could maintain their availability to registrants during normal working hours.

Why was integration of the evening staff necessary?

The need to extend our opening hours was one of the major reasons for integration. We also wanted to improve our current processes to ensure a timely and quality service for all.

There are currently 145,000 registrants on our database. Approximately 70% of these pay their annual retention fee by Direct Debit. The remainder, around 43,500 continue to make payment by cheque.

The department processes approximately 10,000 new applications each year and the majority of these make payment by cheque.

The evening staff had been responsible for processing all payment receipts. The process and time scales were as follows:-

Evening 1 - Cheque & application received in the post, batched up and stamped.
Evening 2 - Receipt input to database.
Evening 3 - Receipt banked and posted.
Evening 4/5 - Input application to database.
Day 5/6 - Receipt allocated to applicants record.

Total: 5/6 working days

Post Integration:

Morning 1 - Cheque & application received in post, batched up and stamped.
Afternoon 1 - Receipt input to database.
Morning 2 - Receipt banked and posted.
Day 2 - Input application to database.
Day 2 - Receipt allocated to applicants record.

Total: 2 working days

Allowing the evening shift to process payment receipts caused a delay of at least 5 or 6 working days. Integration reduced processing times by at least 3 or 4 days. There are many benefits to both the UK & International Departments and applicants/registrants;

- Fewer telephone calls to both registration departments (UK and International).
- Quicker dispatch/receipt of certificates resulting in a reduced need for written/verbal confirmation.
- Prompt availability of data and financial information for all Registration staff.
- A more professional, efficient service for applicants, registrants and employers.

In addition to this, the International Team will become responsible for entering their own application data when the department is properly resourced. This will allow an extra 35 man-hours per month to be spent dealing with matters relating directly to the UK Registration.

What happened to the evening shift staff?

All staff were made aware from the outset that the evening shift was a temporary solution to an ongoing problem. Integration of the evening shifts workload simply could not happen without employing more daytime staff. To do so would reduce the number of Registration Officers telephone availability. All were briefed some time ago as to the Registration Officer role and were given the opportunity to apply for posts. Of the four current evening staff, all expressed interest as follows:-

Michelle Calligy - Part time (17.5 hrs per week)

Claire Gillick - Full time

George Bolster - Part time (21 hrs per week)

Rosalind Davis - Part time (14 hrs per week)

What are the benefits for:-

- **The Team** - The introduction of the evening shift removed several key duties/tasks that Registration Officers had been responsible previously. Staff felt that the department had turned into a call centre, with the majority of the working day spent dealing with telephone enquiries. This was a major concern for them. Integration restored the much-missed variety and made for a more happy and enthusiastic team. The increase in staff eased the burden in terms of workload and allowed us to increase our availability for telephone calls.
- **The Organisation** - The HPC aims to be the best Health Regulator, and improving services within the UK Registration Department can only assist in the realisation of this vision. The service the UK Registration team provides has a major bearing on how the HPC is perceived by the public and it is our aim to provide a service that is second to none. In addition to this, there are substantial cost benefits to be considered.
- **The Public/Registrants/Applicants** - Integration of the evening shift increased the number of Registration Officers. Even with the additional workload for the daytime team, the additional staff are now able to provide the public/registrants/applicants much improved access to information, especially via the telephone. We now provide 56.5 man-hours per day availability on the telephone as opposed to 44 hours prior to integration.

When did it happen?

The four members of staff joined the daytime team on Friday 1 November 2002.

Was any training required for the evening staff?

The evening shift had excellent background knowledge of the day-to-day dealings of the department. They have a clear understanding of payment processing and data entry. They have used both the Registration and Contacts databases and they also have a clear understanding of the rules governing registration. They had no telephone answering experience, but were all well equipped to start training immediately. Their peers provided "on-the-job" training during normal working hours which is now complete.

Did the daytime staff need to be trained?

Training was necessary for all Registration Officers in the following:-

- Payment Processing (cash input)
- Receipt checking/banking

All Registration Officers had dealt with the above prior to the introduction of the evening shift, but some re-training was necessary. This was carried out during normal working hours and proved not to disrupt our normal routine. The team are making excellent progress in all areas.

Increase in Availability and Flexible Working Hours – 1 November 2002

The department extended its opening hours for incoming telephone calls to 9am prior to the integration of the evening shift in an attempt to relieve the bottleneck which was identified after the introduction of the new telephone system. After only two weeks, staff reported a substantial improvement.

In order to meet the demands of callers and further improve our service to them, we were keen to further extend our opening hours to 8.30am – 5.30pm.

When did this happen?

On the 1 November 2002.

How is this managed?

A Rota system ensures that two Registration Officers start at 8.30am and another two finish at 5.30pm. All staff with the exception of those listed below are included.

Jenny Beckford - An 8.30am start is not an option due to childcare issues, although a later finishing time could be an option. Jenny is currently covering maternity leave in the International Department.

Joan Bailey - Childcare issues prevent Joan from working these hours, although during school holidays she may be able to assist. Joan has helped with emergency cover several times since implementation.

Michelle Calligy - Michelle has a 2-year-old daughter and therefore will not be able to work flexible hours.

What happens in an emergency?

Staff share their personal contact details with each other and arrange for emergency cover if necessary individually or through the Registration Manager. Staff have adapted extremely well to this change in their working patterns and no problems or concerns have been raised so far.

New Recruits - November/December 2002

The team was pleased to welcome three new recruits last year. Sabrina Adams and Christine Perera joined us at the beginning of November and Kelly Johnson more recently in December 2002. These replace Cile Pomfret and Brian Collins who left HPC's employ earlier in the year, and Rosemarie Phillip who is now a part of the International team.

All three have received basic training, which was provided by their colleagues and are now able to participate almost fully in the rota. All are making excellent progress and are already proving to be extremely valuable to the team.

Sabrina, Christine and Kelly bring the number of Registration Officers up to 12.

Multi-Profession Integration - Commence February 2003

The procedure for most tasks is the same for all professions once registration has taken place. The team are therefore able to share their workload and assist each other when necessary.

In order to manage the daily workload, registration officers have been "responsible" for (or in some cases more than one) profession. This means that the individual takes control of incoming correspondence, application entry and registration for a particular profession/s.

With the number of registrants growing so dramatically each year, this way of working is no longer viable and is actually unfair on individuals. The "responsibility" is being removed and a more rounded, team-based method of working will be implemented.

The UK Team are moving to the first floor offices in Park House and plans to make this change are to be implemented then. It is anticipated that it will be complete by March 2003.

What are the benefits of this new way of working for:

- **The Team** - A broader knowledge of the registration process for all professions will be developed within the team. Each Registration Officer will deal with a similar number of enquiries, correspondence, amendments, applications, and registrations thus removing the burden from those currently dealing with the larger professions.
- **Registration Officers** - This method will be fairer to all staff and will remove the historical problem of cover for sick/annual leave for some of the more complex professions. It is also intended to motivate staff and increase their awareness/knowledge/understanding. All staff will be able to handle all types of enquiries without having to refer to a specific individual, thus providing a better and more efficient service to the public, applicants and registrants. Individual Registration Officers workloads will become the Departmental workload. This will promote team working, which is essential to the smooth running of the department. All staff have received this proposal enthusiastically, especially considering this particular change was attempted in 2001 when failed miserably due to poor planning and management.
- **The Organisation** - A more knowledgeable department will have an overall benefit for the organisation. Members of staff outside the department will be able to consult with Registration Officer and receive a response without having to wait for a specific individual. Outside enquirers will not have to be passed to a specific individual, as the first point of contact will be able to deal with queries competently and efficiently.

How have staff been made aware of all these changes?

Registration Officers and evening staff have been made aware of these proposed changes during team meetings and one to one's and have reacted very positively. Their input will be invaluable in the timing and implementation of these projects. A "brainstorming" session in relation to Multi-Professional Processing took place in October last year and the team put forward with some excellent ideas. They are aware that teamwork will be essential if this project is succeed.

Review

An Internal review will take place 4-6 weeks after implementation of this project. Staff will be asked for feedback and will be given every opportunity to voice concerns. Staff will also be invited to suggest ideas as to how the system might be improved.

LISA Project - Commence April 2003

The purpose of this project is to develop a world-class registration system that will manage the increased scope of regulatory responsibilities and support growth and development in the future.

The new system is being custom built especially for the HPC and will be reliable, robust and user friendly and will allow us to cope with the increased workload. It will be closely integrated with the web.

This will enable us to access information quickly and provide a better quality of service. Applicants and registrants will have access to change their contact details and it is hoped that this will reduce the number of routine calls to the department.

All Registration Officers have been encouraged to attend weekly project meetings and comment on what is being developed. The teams have attended workshops and have provided the project team with constructive feedback.

All project information is available to staff on the Intranet.