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MINUTES of the twelfth meeting of the Registration Committee of the Health Professions Council held on Wednesday 10 September 2003 at Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU

PRESENT :

Prof. R. Klem (Chairman)
Mr P. Frowen
Dr R. Jones
Mr C. Lea
Dr A. Van der Gaag
Mr G. Sutehall (ex-officio)

IN ATTENDANCE :

Miss L. Pilgrim, Secretary to the Committee
Mr M. Seale, Chief Executive and Registrar
Dr P. Burley, Director of Education and Policy
Miss C. Harkin, Manager, U.K Registration
Miss S. Dawson, Manager, Grandparenting & International Registration
Miss E. Price, Events Manager
Mr S. Hill, Newchurch

ITEM 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from :- Prof. N. Brook, Miss M. Crawford,
Mr I. Massey, Miss P. Sabine, Miss E. Thornton, and Prof. D. Waller.

ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The Committee approved the Agenda.

ITEM 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JULY 2003

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2003 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ITEM 4 MATTERS ARISING

Language Competence

- 4.1 Dr Burley referred to the debate of an amendment to the proposed new Directive which would make Language Competence a clinical competence for all health and social care professionals. This debate had been deferred from September until 1 October 2003.

Health Reference Form

- 4.2 It was noted that there was a specific requirement as to who could complete the Health Reference form, namely a registered medical practitioner who had known the applicant for at least three years; if an applicant was registered with their doctor for less than three years that doctor could still complete the form if he/she had access to the applicant's records for at least three years.

In cases where a doctor had been unable to access the applicant's medical records or where the records had been lost, the applicant should request a medical practitioner registered with the General Medical Council to undertake a medical examination.

There were cases where a medical practitioner refused to sign the Health Reference Form.

The Committee felt that the HPC should reiterate what medical practitioners were confirming when they signed the Health Reference Form. It was **AGREED** that the HPC would write to the British Medical Association, the General Medical Council and the Royal College of Physicians setting out the relevant requirements as stipulated by the Health Professions Order (HPO) and explaining what the HPC required of the general medical practitioner who signed the Health Reference Form. These bodies could then disseminate the information to the relevant parties and journals.

The HPC should confirm with the General Medical Council what, if any, guidance it had provided to its members. If such guidance existed, a copy should be obtained and it could be used by the Registration department to answer queries from medical practitioners who had been asked to sign a Health Reference Form.

Action:MS

Long Standing Applications

- 4.3 Miss Dawson confirmed that the purge of long-standing applications was continuing and that these applicants had been notified on several occasions of the period after which their applications would be purged.

Partners

- 4.4 Mr Frowen raised the issue of the appointment of Partners. The Committee expressed serious concerns about the partner recruitment exercise. The Committee asked the Secretary to bring the matter to the Chief Executive's attention as a matter of urgency.

Action: LP

ITEM 5 RETURN TO PRACTICE

- 5.1 The Committee noted the advice of the HPC's legal adviser that all returners were to be treated as a class. The Committee challenged this interpretation. It was **AGREED** that the Secretary would seek clarification from the HPC's legal adviser and that the issue of "Returners" would be discussed at a special meeting on 24 September 2003.
- 5.2 The Committee did agree that applicants for renewal or readmission to the HPC Register who had not practised for up to two years would not be required to undertake any additional education, training or experience.
- 5.3 The Committee was given a presentation by Mr Hill summarising the process for each of the various routes for applicants seeking entry to the HPC Register. The Committee found the presentation useful.

Action: LP

ITEM 6 LEAD REGISTRATION ASSESSORS

- 6.1 It was explained to the Committee that a lead assessor was an assessor who would, among other things, adjudicate in cases where there was a disagreement between the two assessors who had carried out the original assessment.
- 6.2 The Committee confirmed its agreement to the concept of lead assessors. It was noted that a process would now have to be devised for the appointment of lead assessors.
- 6.3 It was **AGREED** that the lead assessor would be chosen by the group of assessors for each profession from among that group. Each Director at the HPC would write to the assessors for the profession for which they were responsible.

Action: LP

ITEM 7 REGISTRATION REVIEW PANEL

- 7.1 The Committee noted that at its meeting on 15 July 2003 it had agreed that a panel of Committee members would be established to review information contained in the Health Reference Form in cases where the form revealed possible problems with an applicant's ability to practise. The Committee considered that a similar arrangement should be put in place for equivocal cases where an applicant disclosed criminal convictions.
- 7.2 Most members of the Committee had volunteered to sit on the panels. An initial panel had been formed to review current applications where the Health Reference form had raised issues. It was agreed that members of this panel would review, with the Registration Manager, cases which disclosed criminal convictions after the meeting. The applicants' identity would not be known to the panel; each case would have a unique identifier number.
- 7.3 It was suggested that members of the panel should attend registration assessor training days. The next training days would take place on 12th and 18th September and further dates would be arranged in October.

It was **AGREED** that the Registration Manager would arrange a rota for the panel members and that a single panel would review the health issues and the issue of criminal convictions.

It was **AGREED** that the HPC's legal advisers would be consulted about the form and content of the notification to be sent to applicants where admission had been refused on the basis of the panel's decision.

Action: CH/LP

ITEM 8 APPLICANTS' PROOF OF IDENTITY

- 8.1 The Committee was informed that in some cases applicants did not have a birth certificate but did have a School Leaving Certificate which in their country of origin was acceptable in place of a birth certificate.
- 8.2 It was **AGREED** that the HPC would check with the embassy of the relevant country for confirmation of these facts and for confirmation of the status of the School Leaving certificate.
- 8.3 The Committee considered that if such alternative evidence of identity was acceptable this should be reflected in the Guidance Notes.

Action: SD

ITEM 9 APPLICATIONS FROM REFUGEES

- 9.1 The Committee was informed that an application had been received from a refugee who had not been able to supply the documentation required. It was suggested that information from bodies such as Refugee Councils would be helpful.

- 9.2 Following discussion the Committee agreed that such applicants would need to: provide evidence of their official refugee status, such as a letter from the Home Office; be interviewed by assessors; and take a test of competence if required.
- 9.3 It was suggested that once a process was defined it should be posted on the HPC website.

ITEM 10 COMMITTEE – PROCESS AND OUTPUT

This item was postponed to the next meeting on 5 November 2003.

ITEM 11 REPORT ON REGISTRATION ASSESSORS' TRAINING DAY

These training days had taken place on the 12th and 14th August 2003. The Committee noted that the feedback from the days had been very positive.

ITEM 12 GUIDANCE NOTES

It was confirmed that the Notes had been updated in August 2003. It was **AGREED** that Committee members would send any further changes or amendments to the Secretary, noting that the Notes would be updated in December 2003.

ITEM 13 MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION & TRAINING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30 JULY 2003

The Committee noted these.

ITEM 14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 14.1 Mr Seale, in response to a question with respect to chiropody and podiatry, confirmed that the title on the retention Certificate would be Chiropodist / Podiatrist.
- 14.2 The Chairman commented that she had received complaints from registrants who had not received their certificates. The Chief Executive said that in such circumstances registrants should be advised to contact him or the Registration Managers.
- 14.3 The Committee praised the registration officers for their hard work.

ITEM 15 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on 5th November 2003 at 10 a.m.

CHAIRMAN