
Visitors' report

Name of education provider	North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Programme name	IHCD Paramedic Award
Validating body/awarding body	IHCD (part of Edexcel)
Mode of delivery	Block release
Relevant part of HPC register	Paramedic
Date of visit	18-19 June 2008

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Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 13 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Paramedic' must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 25 March 2009. At the Committee meeting on 25 March 2009, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was an approved programme which had not been approved since the publication of the QAA subject benchmark statements. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was an HPC only visit. The education provider and validating/awarding body did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Mr Robert Dobson (Paramedic) Mr James Petter (Paramedic) Ms Linda Mutema (Radiographer)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Miss Elisa Simeoni
Proposed student numbers	12
Initial approval	September 2000
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	Mid April 2009
Chair	Mr Eddie Pope (North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust)
Secretary	Ms Leila Mousa (North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust)
Members of the joint panel	Mr Pat McFadden (North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust, Observer)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider.

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External verifier reports for 2007 and 2008	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study skills guide	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not review a practice placement handbook prior to the visit as a separate practice placement handbook has not been produced but information relating to practice placements was included in the documentation.

During the visit the HPC saw the following groups or facilities;

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators/mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (e.g. specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 46 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 17 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors agreed that the education provider may wish to discuss some of these conditions with the validating/awarding body before attempting to respond to the conditions. The visitors may have identified, within the condition, those which they feel the education provider may wish to discuss with the validating/awarding body.

The visitors have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme.

Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

- 2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.**

Condition: The programme team must review the programme documentation to clearly state that successful completion of the programme will lead to eligibility to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the programme team, the current wording in some document could be misleading and leave people with the impression that HPC registration is an automatic entitlement at the end of the programme. Therefore, the visitors felt that the programme documentation must be amended to clearly state that successful completion of the programme will lead to eligibility to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council.

- 2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.**

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of advertising material given to potential applicants.

Reason: In the documentation submitted and in discussion with the programme team, it was clear that the evidence provided of advertising material was an internal document only addressed to people who already work at North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust. Therefore, the visitors felt that they must see evidence of advertising document also given to potential applicants who are external to the Trust.

- 2.2.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.**

Condition: The education provider must review the admissions procedures to ensure that criminal convictions checks have been completed by the point of registration onto the programme.

Reason: In discussions with the programme team and students, it was clear that people do not systematically undertake criminal convictions checks by the point of registration onto the programme, especially for those who already work for North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust. Therefore, the visitors felt the education provider must ensure that criminal convictions checks are systematically undertaken by all people prior to enrol onto the programme.

2.2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including Accreditation of Prior Learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Condition: The education provider must provide an accreditation of prior (experiential) learning policy.

Reason: In the documentation submitted, there was no indication that an accreditation of prior (experiential) learning policy was in place. Therefore the visitors felt that the education provider must provide this policy in order they make sure that academic and/or professional entry standards are appropriate.

2.3 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has an equal opportunities policy and anti-discriminatory policy in relation to candidates and students, together with an indication of how this will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must provide consistent equal opportunities policy and anti-discriminatory policy in relation to candidates and students for the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

Reason: In the documentation submitted, only the equal opportunities policy and anti-discriminatory policy of one of the merged ambulance trust was provided. Therefore, the visitors felt they must see the equal opportunities policy and anti-discriminatory policy addressed and applicable to North West Ambulance Service, and therefore including all the merged trusts.

3.9 Where students participate as patients or clients in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The programme team must redraft and resubmit the student consent form to inform students they can decline to participate as patients or clients in practical and clinical teaching.

Reason: Currently the student consent form does not inform students they can decline to act as a patient or client. To ensure students are aware they can opt-out of these situations, the visitors felt the form must be updated to include an opt-out clause.

3.11 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide an attendance policy and clearly communicate to students when attendance is compulsory.

Reason: In the documentation submitted and in discussion with students, there was no evidence that attendance requirements specific to the programme were

clearly communicated to students. The evidence the visitors saw were only general policies of the Trust like the sickness absence policy and the return to work policy but these policies were not specific to the programme. Therefore, the visitors felt that the education provider must clearly communicate to students what the attendance requirements are for the programme and any consequences of missing compulsory teaching.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the Standards of Proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team must revisit the learning outcomes for the programme modules to clearly reflect the following standards of proficiency and demonstrate how these learning outcomes are addressed and assessed:

1a.1 Registrant paramedics must be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession

- understand the need to act in the best interest of service users at all times
- understand what is required of them by the Health Professions Council
- understand the need to respect, and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user including their role in the diagnostic and therapeutic process and in maintaining health and well being
- be aware of current UK legislation applicable to the work of their profession
- be able to practice in accordance with current legislation governing the use of prescription-only medicines by paramedics

1a.2 Registrant paramedics must be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner

1a.3 Registrant paramedics must understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality

1a.4 Registrant paramedics must understand the importance of and be able to obtain informed consent

1a.5 Registrant paramedics must be able to exercise a professional duty of care

1b.1 Registrant paramedics must be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, service users and their relatives and carers

- understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
- understand the need to engage service users and carers in planning and evaluating diagnostics, treatments and interventions to meet their needs and goals
- be able to make appropriate referrals

- understand the range and limitations of operational relationships between paramedics and other healthcare professionals
- recognise the principles and practices of other healthcare professionals and healthcare systems and how they interact with the role of a paramedic

1b.3 Registrant paramedics must be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, service users, their relatives and carers

- understand how communications skills affect the assessment of service users and how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, physical ability and learning ability
- be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users and others
- be aware of the characteristics and consequences of non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by culture, age, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status
- understand the need to provide service users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions
- understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist service users whose first language is not English, wherever possible
- recognise that relationships with service users should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility
- be able to identify anxiety and stress in patients, carers and others and recognise the potential impact upon communication

2b.1 Registrant paramedics must be able to use research, reasoning and problem-solving skills to determine appropriate actions

- recognise the value of research to the critical evaluation of practice
- be able to engage in evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures
- be aware of a range of research methodologies
- be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform their own practice

2b.3 Registrant paramedics must be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales

- understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different groups distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors
- understand the need to demonstrate sensitivity to the factors which shape lifestyle that may impact on the individual's health and affect the interaction between the patient and paramedic

- 2b.5 Registrant paramedics must be able to maintain records appropriately**
- be able to keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need to handle these records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
 - understand the need to use only accepted terminology in making records
- 2c.1 Registrant paramedics must be able to monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly**
- be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the responses of service users to their care
 - be able to evaluate intervention plans using recognised outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the service user
 - recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes
- 2c.2 Registrant paramedics must be able to audit, reflect on and review practice**
- understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance
 - be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures
 - be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
 - participate in quality assurance programmes, where appropriate
 - understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
 - recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review
- 3a.1 Registrant paramedics must know the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to their profession-specific practice**
- be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process
 - understand the following aspects of biological science:
 - the main sequential stages of normal development, including cognitive, emotional and social measures of maturation through the human lifespan
 - understand the following aspects of behavioural science:
 - psychological and social factors that influence an individual in health and illness
 - how psychology and sociology can inform an understanding of physical and mental health, illness and health care in the context of paramedic practice and the incorporation of this knowledge into paramedic practice
 - how aspects of psychology and sociology are fundamental to the role of the paramedic in developing and maintaining effective relationships

- understand the following aspects of clinical science:
 - principles of evaluation and research methodologies which enable the integration of theoretical perspectives and research evidence into the design and implementation of effective paramedic practice

Reason: From the discussions with the programme team, the students and a review of the documents, the visitors felt that the programme did not clearly link all of the learning outcomes to successful attainment of the standards of proficiency. The visitors felt that the programme documentation must clearly articulate where the above standards of proficiency are met in the programme to ensure that those who complete the programme are safe and effective practitioners.

5.3.1 The practice placement settings must provide a safe environment.

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to provide evidence of the audit that placements are subjected to before students commence the practice-based element of the programme.

Reason: In the documentation supplied by the programme team, information about placement audits, and therefore how the programme team ensures that placement practice settings offer a safe environment to students, was not provided. The visitors wish to see evidence of the audits that hospital site placements go through and an example audit for the ambulance station environments in order to ensure that the education provider has mechanisms to assure practice placements provide a safe environment.

5.3.2 The practice placement settings must provide safe and effective practice.

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to provide evidence of the audit that placements are subjected to before students commence the practice-based element of the programme.

Reason: In the documentation supplied by the programme team, information about placement audits, and therefore how the programme team ensures that placement practice settings provide a safe and effective practice environment for students, was not provided. The visitors wish to see evidence of the audits that hospital site placements go through and an example audit for the ambulance station environments in order to ensure that the education provider has mechanisms in place to assure safe and effective practice in the practice environment.

5.6 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to provide evidence of a consistent audit process that placements are subjected to before students commence the practice-based element of the programme.

Reason: In the documentation supplied by the programme team information about placement audits, and therefore how the programme team ensures that placement environments are suitable, it was clear that the system for approving and monitoring all placements was ad-hoc and not embedded as a systematic approach. Therefore the visitors wish to see evidence of a consistent audit process that placements are subjected to before students commence the practice-based element of the programme in order to ensure that this standard is appropriately met.

5.7.1 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the learning outcomes to be achieved.

Condition: The education provider should review the learning outcomes criteria of the programme to better reflect the learning outcomes that effectively take place during placements.

Reason: In discussion with the placement providers, it was clear that the learning outcomes were not truly reflective of the learning that takes place during placements. Therefore the visitors felt that the education provider should amend the programme documentation to better reflect the learning that effectively take place during placements.

5.7.4 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that students and practice placement educators (mentors) are provided with detailed information in formal documentation about the assessment procedures, including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure.

Reason: During the meetings with the practice placement educators (mentors) and students, it was clear that the information about the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure, given by the education provider to these groups was not sufficient. Therefore the visitors felt that formal documentation including the assessment procedures, and including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure must be produced.

5.7.5 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the communication and lines of responsibility.

Condition: The education provider must ensure students and practice placement educators (mentors) are provided with detailed information in formal documentation about the communication and lines of responsibility.

Reason: During the meeting with the practice placement educators (mentors) and with students, it was clear that the information about the communication and lines of responsibility given by the education provider to these groups was not sufficient. Therefore the visitors felt that the communication and lines of responsibility must be included in formal documentation.

5.10 The education provider must ensure necessary information is supplied to practice placement providers.

Condition: The education provider must produce evidence that the necessary information is provided to practice placement educators (mentors).

Reason: From the documentation submitted and in discussion with the practice placement providers, it appeared that not all necessary information was clearly supplied to practice placement educators (mentors) by the education provider. Therefore the visitors felt that a practice placement handbook must be produced to ensure necessary information is provided to them.

5.13 The placement providers must have an equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policy in relation to candidates and students, together with an indication of how this will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that there is a process in place to audit the placement providers in order to make sure that there is an equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policy in place in relation to students.

Reason: While it was felt that placements providers have an equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policy in place, the visitors did not see any evidence that the education provider has a process in place to audit the placements providers to be sure that they have an equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policy. Therefore the visitors felt that the education provider must provide evidence that there is a process in place to audit the placement providers.

6.7.4 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for a procedure for the right of appeal for students.

Condition: The education provider must include the procedure for the right of appeal for students in the programme documentation.

Reason: The procedure for the right of appeal for students was not included in the submitted programme documentation. The visitors felt that this procedure must be made available to students and therefore felt that this document must be included in the programme documentation.

6.7.5 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner from the relevant part of the HPC Register unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence that an external examiner has been appointed to assess this programme. In order to meet this standard the external examiner must be from the relevant part of the Register unless alternative arrangements are made with the HPC. The programme documentation must be revisited to state this policy requirement.

Reason: In discussions with the programme team it was apparent that there was no external examiner for the programme. The visitors recognise that the validating/awarding body visits the education provider every year to assess the programme against their rules and regulations. However, the visitors did not feel this was the equivalent of an external examiner's review. The programme team must appoint an appropriate external examiner and clearly state in the documentation that this standard is being followed on the programme.

Recommendations

- 2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.**

Recommendation: The education provider should clearly articulate in the advertising material when attendance is compulsory.

Reason: In the documentation submitted and in discussion with students, there was no evidence that attendance requirement specific to the programme are clearly communicated to students prior to enrol on to the programme. The visitors felt that the education provider should clearly communicate to students prior going onto the programme what the attendance requirements are and any consequences of missing compulsory teaching and in order they can make sure they can attend the course.

- 3.13 The learning resources, including the stock of periodicals and subject books, and IT facilities, including internet access, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.**

Recommendation: The education provider should update the book lists.

Reason: In the documentation submitted, it was clear that the bibliography and learning material list included in the module descriptors were not up to date, in particular Tortora, J.G and Grabowski, R.R (2002) *Principles of anatomy and physiology* 9th ed. Wiley New York Chichester. Therefore, in order students refer to the latest up-to-date edition of the books, the visitors felt that the education provider should update the book lists.

- 4.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum guidance for the profession.**

Recommendation: The programme team should map the programme against the curriculum guidance of the professional body, the College of Paramedics (British Paramedic Association), for the programme to better reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum for the profession.

Reason: In the documentation submitted, there was no evidence that the programme was mapped against the College of Paramedics (British Paramedic Association) curriculum guidance. Therefore, the visitors felt that in order the programme better reflects the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum for the profession, a mapping document against the curriculum guidance of the College of Paramedics (British Paramedic Association) should be submitted.

4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

Recommendation: The education should review more regularly the curriculum in the light of changes to clinical practice.

Reason: Although there is an annual review of provision generally, in order for the curriculum to remain relevant to the HPC Standards of Proficiency and changes to current clinical practice, the visitors felt that more regular reviews of the curriculum would be recommendable.

5.8.3 Unless other arrangements are agreed, practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Recommendation: The education provider should harmonise arrangements of training for practice placements educators.

Reason: In discussions with the programme team and practice placement educators (mentors), it was clear that there are several levels of practice placements educators training depending on the merged trust arrangement. The visitors felt that in term of consistency, North West Ambulance Service should harmonise training for practice placement educators (mentors).

5.9 There must be collaboration between the education provider and practice placement providers.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to enhance collaboration with practice placement providers.

Reason: During the meeting with the practice placement providers, it was clear that there is collaboration in place with the education provider. However, the visitors encourage the education provider to enhance this collaboration by communicating more regularly with them.

Mr Robert Dobson
Mr James Petter
Ms Linda Mutema