

Education data set highlights – 2020-21 academic year

In this period, we ran two quality assurance models, our longstanding model which was in place with few changes for around 15 years, and the pilot of our new quality assurance model. This data primarily relates to the application of the previous (or legacy) model, which was discontinued at the end of the 2020-21 academic year, and replaced by the new model.

This report provides highlights from the data set produced, focusing on time and quality wherever possible. We have provided commentary to explore and explain the data presented, and a full set of data through the appendix.

Conclusions drawn from the data are limited, due to the discontinuation of the legacy model. The new model functions in a very different way, and so there is no need to draw out improvements and developments to the legacy model. Where they are relevant, we have picked out learning for the new model, and will consider this through ongoing model development.

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Number of approved programmes

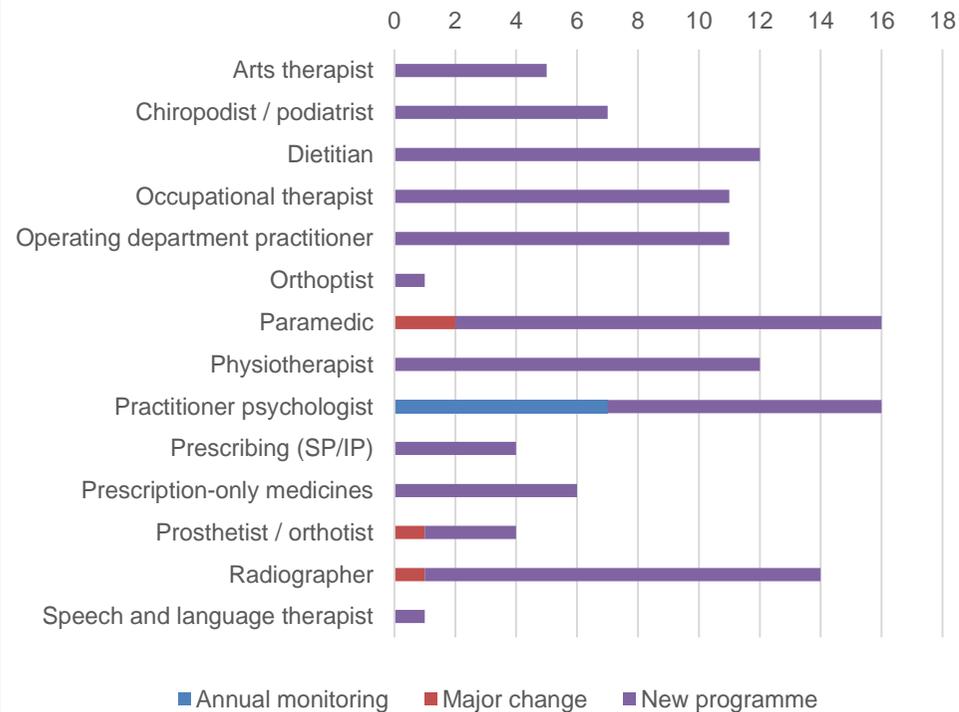


Snapshot of programme numbers on 31 August 2021

- For the first time, we did not see growth for approved programmes within the professions we have continued to regulate
- This figure is calculated from programmes open and approved on 31 August of each year, and therefore does not include new or replacement programmes which start for first cohorts in September. 46 programmes opened in September, which brings numbers closer to the previous figure
- Professions previously identified as ‘vulnerable’ (chiropodists / podiatrists, orthoptist, and prosthetists / orthotists – professions which have historically struggled to recruit new learners) have either maintained or increased numbers
- We have continued to work with stakeholders across the UK on understanding and supporting workforce needs. The HCPC has not been a driver for the closing of provision, and there are limited conclusions we can reach based on the reduction in programme numbers in some professions
- The number of programmes have dropped for the second year in a row since 2018-19 due to:
 - Social workers in England moving to a new regulator in the 2019-20 academic year
 - Closure of Diploma of Higher Education paramedic programmes (24 programmes), due to an increase in the level at which paramedic training must be delivered – most of these programmes are being replaced by new BSc (hons) programmes, or learner numbers have increased for existing BSc (hons) programmes

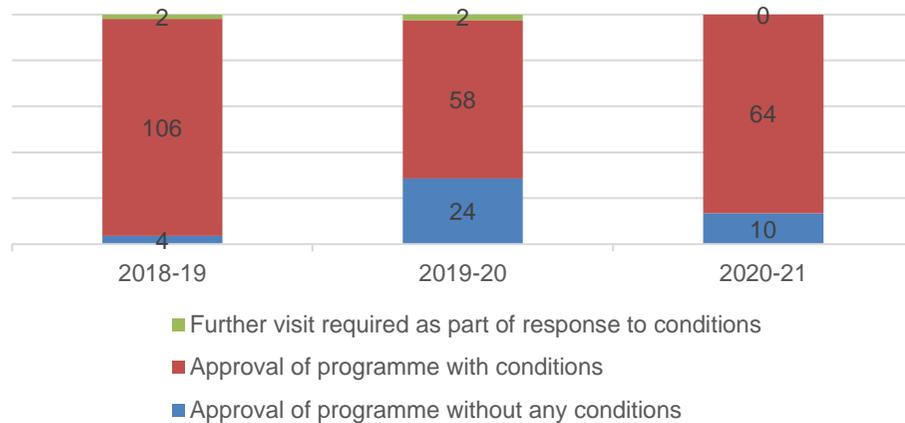
- Reductions in the number of biomedical scientist programmes, and across most allied health professions (AHPs)

Assessments through the approval process



- We undertook 110 approval assessments across all but three professional areas (biomedical science, clinical science, and podiatric surgery)
- The number of programmes assessed has increased from 91 in the previous academic year
- Programmes considered for the paramedic profession went some way to making up the numbers of programmes which closed, and these were all at or above the new threshold requirements of bachelor level
- Most programmes considered were new, but we also triggered the approval process where we had concerns that needed further investigation out of the annual monitoring and major change processes

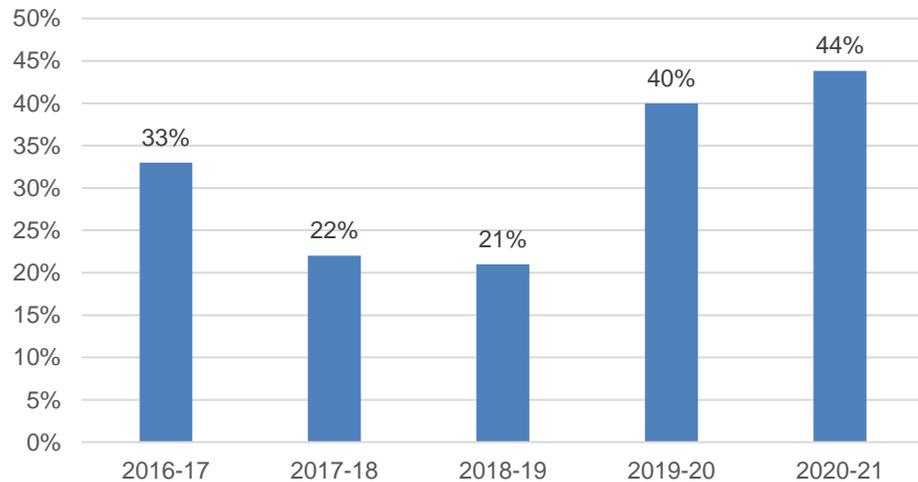
Approval process outcomes



- All programmes that went through the full process were approved or reapproved
- We saw a reduction in the proportion of programmes approved without conditions, from 31% to 14%
- This means we needed to set further regulatory requirements (via conditions) for a higher proportion of programmes than in the previous year (86% compared to 69%)
- However, the data shows that providers have more easily engaged with meeting requirements, shown by the jump in the percentage of programmes being approved within four months (see below)

Time taken to conclude the approval process

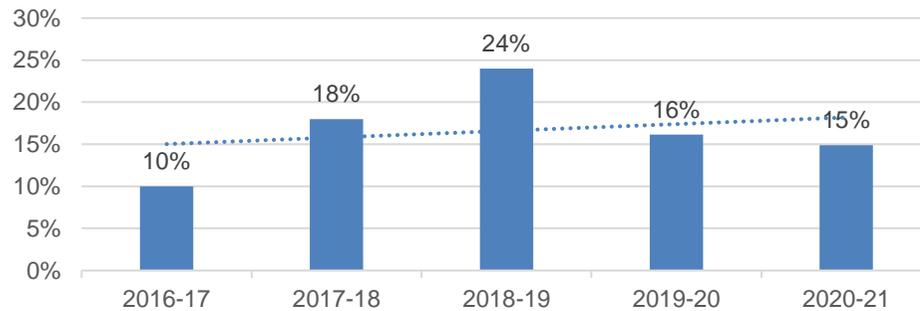
Visit to final outcome within 3 months



- The figure of achieving a timely final outcome for education providers continued to improve this year
- This is due to continued efforts within the executive to improve our performance against time-based service levels:
 - Frontloaded effort with providers to address issues prior to visits, meaning the significance of conditions was reduced
 - Focus of reducing the time taken to produce visitors' reports, resulting in a drop from 26 to 20 days
 - The average time between the visit and the conditions deadline has dropped from 2.1 to 1.9 months
- This also resulted in the percentage of programmes approved within four months of the visit rising from 65% to 82%

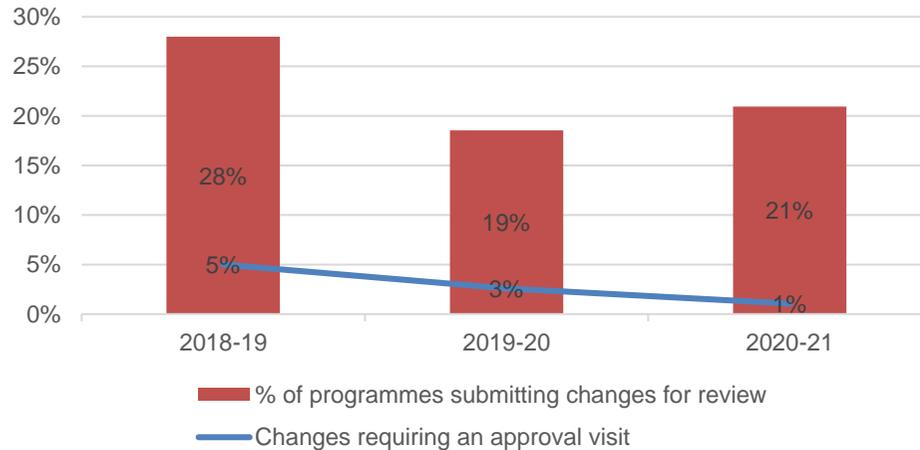
Approval process cancellations

% of programmes where visits were cancelled



- Education providers cancel visits when they consider they cannot demonstrate how they meet regulatory requirements, or when internal or external drivers for establishing new provision change
- The percentage of visits cancelled was maintained at broadly the same level this level
- Assessments were almost exclusively cancelled prior to the visit, meaning visit and post-visit effort was avoided

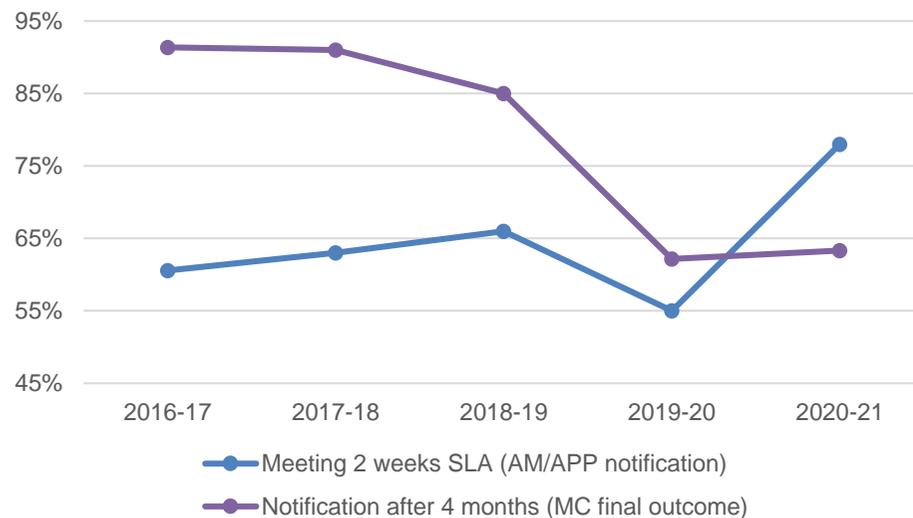
Major changes received, and process outcomes



- Major change was a process triggered by education providers when they considered regulatory input was required into changes led by the provider
- The number of major changes received dropped from 267 to 192, but the proportion of approved programmes submitting a change increased slightly due to the number of programmes reducing
- We saw small reductions of major changes in many areas of practice but increases within:
 - Prescribing (16%) – due to continued expansion of prescribing programmes to further professions
 - Paramedic (8%) – due to changes resulting from the increase in threshold level of qualification for the profession, and higher and degree apprenticeship programmes
 - Dietitian (6%) – Due to higher and degree apprenticeship programmes

- The percentage of changes triggering the approval process continued to fall, to 1% of programmes
- This was due to the vast majority of changes being triaged correctly by the executive, filtering out changes which should be considered through the approval process prior to full assessment through this process
- Through the major change process, education providers were actively supported in their submissions, and our partner visitors clearly set requirements to be met through the process where required

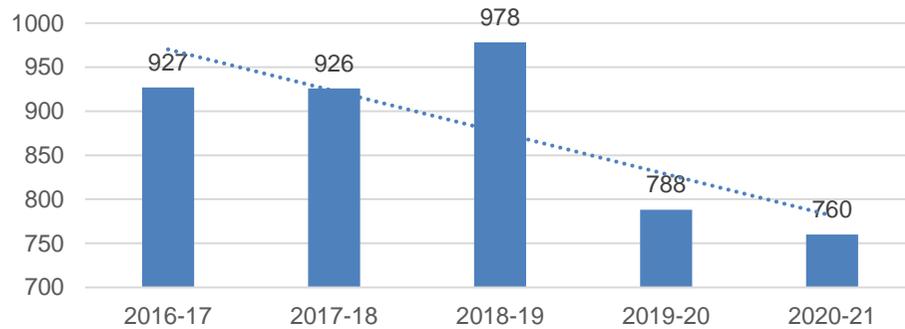
Time taken to conclude the major change process



- We see the drop from last year to conclude the major change process was maintained this year, with 63% of cases reaching their final conclusion within four months
- This is due to the continued complexity of major change assessments, including assessing higher and degree apprenticeship proposals through the process
- On average, the process was concluded in 11.6 weeks, which is just under the target of 12 weeks
- We have improved performance against the service level to conclude cases where the executive outcome is the annual monitoring or approval process, triaging 78% of these cases within the service level
- This is due to continued focus on meeting service levels within the function, including more clearly defining internal deadlines for review and sign off

Annual monitoring

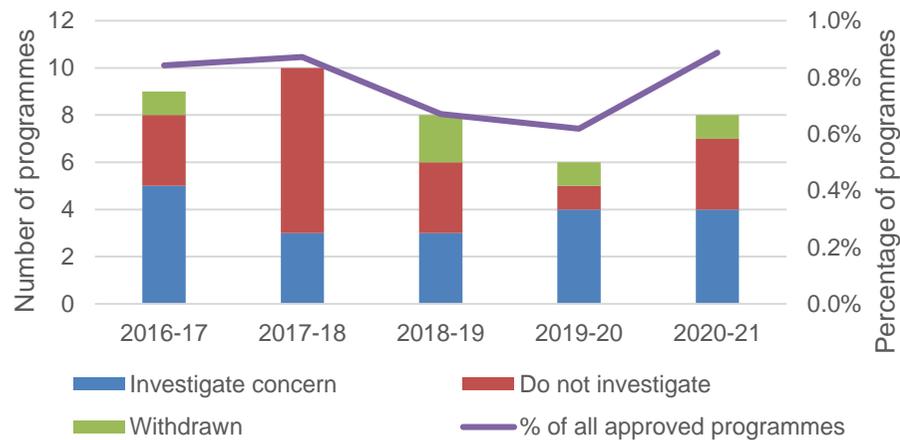
Number of programmes within annual monitoring



- The number of programmes within annual monitoring dropped this year in line with the number of approved programmes reducing
- Normally, we split providers into two groups, with one group being audited and the other asked to provide a declaration, on a two yearly cycle
- This year, all programmes within annual monitoring were asked to submit a declaration, due to a risk-based resourcing decision linked to piloting the new quality assurance model within the existing Departmental budget
- As the declaration is a simple process, and there were no issues with providers returning their declaration, we have not provided quality or time-based KPIs for this section

Concerns

Concerns received



- Concerns received were maintained to a similar level that in previous years, and we investigated a similar proportion of concerns
- Three concerns investigated have not yet reached a conclusion