Welcome to Issues Brief.

Each week this email provides a summary of news and issues relevant to our external stakeholders. Areas covered include Department of Health consultations or reports, parliamentary questions or debates and news from other regulators and professional bodies. We also provide a round-up of news from within HCPC and relevant external media coverage.

Issues Brief can be found on the intranet at Communications > Internal communications > Issues brief

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1. Parliament

House of Commons Health Select Committee Nursing and Midwifery Council annual accountability session

On 16 October the Health Committee took oral evidence from the Nursing and Midwifery Council as part of the Committee’s ongoing scrutiny of regulatory bodies.

Giving evidence from the NMC was Mark Addison CB, Chair, and Jackie Smith, Chief Executive and Registrar. Topics discussed included failing IT systems, the £20million grant from the Department of Health, staff turnover (36%), revalidation and healthcare assistants.

Written Ministerial Statement Nursing and Midwifery Grant – Daniel Poulter MP

To read online please click here. (scroll down)
House of Commons Written Answers Social Workers: Voluntary Work

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will estimate the number of social work volunteer placements offered by local authorities in the latest period for which figures are available; (2) what assessment he has made of the (a) length and (b) quality of social work volunteer placements with local authorities; (3) what steps his Department is taking to encourage local authorities to offer volunteer placements for social work.

Norman Lamb: The Department recognises that by drawing on the expertise and skills of volunteers, the health and care sector has the potential to deliver responsive personalised services, particularly to some of the most vulnerable people and communities in our society. In October 2011 the Department published 'Social action for health and well-being: building co-operative communities', a strategic vision for volunteering, which aims to encourage leaders and decision-makers in the health and social care sector to work together, and to consider where and how volunteering can help to meet local priorities and improve the quality of services and support. A copy of the document has already been placed in the Library. The use of trainee social workers on practice placements can also help local authorities to deliver more responsive services. However, the use of these trainees, like other volunteers, is a local decision to be based on local needs, priorities and circumstances. The Department has no role in assessing or monitoring the volume, length or quality of the placements, and does not hold this information centrally. To qualify as a social worker and register with the Health and Care Professions Council, trainees must undertake practice placement days; the College of Social Work has published guidance on the criteria to be used by higher education institutions in arranging practice placements for students.

To read online please click here.

2. Regulation

Department of Health offers Nursing and Midwifery Council £20million grant

Health Minister Dr Dan Poulter has today announced that the Government has offered the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) a one off grant of £20 million to improve the NMC's performance. The Government expects that this support will allow the NMC to protect nurses and midwives from the full impact of a proposed registration fee rise of almost 60 per cent. The Government expects that this grant will provide the extra financial support required for the NMC to properly tackle a backlog of fitness to practise cases, as well as to allow it to reduce the effect of a fee rise for hard-working nurses and midwives.

To read online please click here.

NMC response please click here.
Major healthcare organisations pledge support for staff who speak up to raise concerns

Major healthcare bodies have signed up to the first national charter to drive improvements in support for staff who raise concerns. The NHS Employers organisation today launches the Speaking Up charter. This is the first charter outlining a commitment by the NHS Employers organisation, regulators, health unions, professional associations and bodies to work together to support staff when raising a safety concern or issue at work. Twenty-eight organisations have signed the new charter, which will help organisations fulfil their commitment to staff who raise concerns. Alongside the HCPC, signatories to the charter include NHS Employers, the British Medical Association, the General Medical Council, the General Dental Council, the General Pharmaceutical Council, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, the British Dental Association, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, UNISON and Unite.

To read online please click here.

3. Social Care

Home care workers 'not properly vetted'

More than 200 home care providers in England have been using staff who have not been properly vetted, the BBC’s Inside Out programme has found. The firms may have failed to carry out criminal checks or ensured workers were not barred by professional bodies. A Freedom of Information Request showed the Care Quality Commission saw the staff as not "appropriately qualified". Care Minister Norman Lamb said it did not show "the whole system" totalling about 6,000 operators had failed.

To read online please click here.

Social work courses take stricter line on suitability of applicants

Most universities and colleges in England are changing the selection and interview processes for their social work courses, in line with the Social Work Reform Board’s recommendations for improving the calibre of students.

To read online please click here.
4. Health and Policy

Patient safety: 'Not the Francis report'

On Monday 15 October, when Robert Francis QC was due to publish a delayed report into failures at the Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust in 2005-9, National Voices - the health and care charity coalition - releases its own report calling for greater urgency in improving patient safety and care quality. The report warns that there could be another "Mid-Staffs" while NHS planners and providers continue to "wait for further instructions". It says this is against a background in which the NHS is already under stress with funding "failing to keep pace with demand" and the NHS reforms are "distracting time and attention from front-line care".

To read online please click here.

Department of Health becomes first government department to sign Time to Change mental health pledge

On World Mental Health Day, the department of Health has become the first government department to sign up to Time to Change the mental health anti-stigma programme.

To read online please click here.

5. HCPC News round-up

68,000 social workers in England still to renew their HCPC registration

This week we have written to over 68,000 social workers reminding them to renew their registration with HCPC before the deadline of Friday 30 November 2012.

To read online please click here.

HCPC twitter now has over 2,000 followers!

To take a look at HCPC’s twitter page please click here.

To view HCPC’s Facebook page please click here.