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 the HCPC and relevant media coverage.

Issues brief can be found on the HCPC website > Publications > Issues brief

1. Parliament

New health minister in Northern Ireland following Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) reshuffle

The DUP’s Edwin Poots and Nelson McCausland are being replaced as Stormont ministers, party leader Peter Robinson has announced. Jim Wells will replace Mr Poots as health minister, while Mervyn Storey will take over from Nelson McCausland as social development minister.

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The House of Commons and House of Lords are in recess

2. Regulation

General Medical Council (GMC) gives green light to “passport to practise"

The GMC has agreed to develop a single national licensing examination, marking the first step to a unified “passport to practise” for doctors wishing to practise in the UK. The exam will be designed to give patients assurance about the competence and quality of those treating them, regardless of where they received their training.

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Publication of response to Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) consultation on changes to governing legislation

The Department of Health have published the response to the consultation on changes to the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 to help the regulator fulfil its duties. Most respondents agreed that the amendments will result in more efficient fitness-to-practise processes. These changes will seek to benefit registrants, improve public protection and increase public confidence in the NMC. Parliament will lay the draft Order shortly.

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Consultation on measures to improve the General Dental Council's (GDC) fitness to practise process

The Department of Health has published a consultation on proposals to give the (GDC) greater flexibility when conducting investigations into a dental professional's practice. The Department of Health is seeking views on proposals to make the GDC's early investigation stages of its fitness to practise processes more effective and efficient through amendments to the Dentists Act 1984.

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British Dental Association (BDA) tells General Dental Council (GDC): “Show your hand”

The BDA has issued a further legal letter again demanding that the GDC reveals the information on which its proposed annual retention fee rise was based. The BDA maintains that the further information is required in order to make the GDC’s consultation fair.

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70 percent of nurses and midwives are still not claiming tax relief on their registration fees

Thousands of nurses and midwives are still not claiming tax relief on their annual registration fee, a survey by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has found.

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3. Social care

Labour vows to “bring social care into NHS” and boost support for carers

Shadow health secretary Andy Burnham has pledged to bring social care “into the NHS” to form a combined health and care service if a Labour government is formed next year. The plans would see the NHS “bringing social care in and lifting it up” with care work no longer being seen as a “dead-end job but part of one workforce working to NHS standards”.

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4. Health and policy

Labour promises £2.5billion funding boost “to save NHS”

Ed Miliband has said a future Labour government would pay for 36,000 more doctors, nurses and midwives, partly funded by a tax on tobacco firms. The Labour leader told his conference the £2.5billion funding pledge to "save and transform" the NHS by 2020 would be the centrepiece of his plan for government. It will be paid for by a "mansion tax", a crackdown on tax avoidance and a levy on tobacco firms' market share.

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NHS whistleblowing “problems persist”

Whistleblowers still face real problems in speaking out in the health service, despite the push to create a more open culture, campaigners say. Promoting whistleblowing was a key recommendation of the public inquiry into the Stafford Hospital scandal. A number of steps have since been taken in England, but Patients First warned that a "culture of fear" still existed. It has produced a dossier of 70 cases, highlighting problems like bullying and mismanagement of complaints.

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Scotland’s Chief Nursing Officer announces departure

Ros Moore, the Chief Nursing Officer for Scotland, will step down from her role at the end of the year, the Scottish Government has announced.

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Patient safety incident reporting continues to improve

NHS England has welcomed the publication of six-monthly data on patient safety incidents reported to the National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS) between 1 October 2013 and 30 April 2014. The data shows the NHS is continuing to get better at recognising and reporting patient safety incidents.

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5. HCPC news round up

Consultation on Rules for professional indemnity

In July 2014 legislation was introduced which requires all our registrants (other than social workers in England) to have a professional indemnity arrangement in place as a condition of their registration with us. We are now seeking the views of stakeholders on proposed changes to our Rules in order to fully implement the new statutory requirement.

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Registration renewal update

Since Monday 1 September 2014 35.3 per cent of social workers and 46.5 per cent of operating department practitioners have renewed their HCPC registration. Both professions must renew their registration by Sunday 30 November 2014.

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