

Council, 19 May 2016

Policy and Standards Department report

Executive summary and recommendations

**Introduction**

The attached report provides an update about the activities of the Policy and Standards Department.

**Decision**

The Council is invited to discuss the report.

**Background information**

None.

**Resource implications**

None as a result of this paper.

**Financial implications**

None as a result of this paper.

**Appendices**

None.

**Date of paper**

9 May 2016

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## **Policy and Standards Department report – 19/20 May 2016**

This paper provides an update about the work of the department.

### **Consultation on standards for orthoptist exemptions; consultation on amending the LA/POM annotations**

- The above consultations commenced on 8 March 2016 and ran until 3 May 2016.
- The Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2016 were made in late February 2016 and introduce the list of exemption medicines for orthoptists. The consultation on the standards has commenced on the understanding that further legislation will be introduced later this year which will require orthoptists to have an annotation on the HCPC Register before being eligible to use the exemptions. That legislation is expected to come into effect in October 2016.
- The results of the consultations are due to be considered by the Education and Training Committee and the Council at their meetings in June and July 2016.

### **Guidance on social media use**

- At its meeting on 3 March 2016, the Education and Training Committee agreed to develop guidance on registrants' use of social media. This guidance would build upon the new standard added to the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
- The first stage in developing the guidance is trialling the use of a 'crowdsourcing' platform. This is an online discussion forum that will allow us to engage with registrants who are regular users of social media, and other stakeholders, to help inform the content of draft guidance for consultation. The crowdsourcing campaign commenced on 10 May 2016 and will run for 2-3 weeks.
- Draft guidance for public consultation is due to be brought to the Education and Training Committee and the Council at their meetings in September 2016.

### **Physician associates**

- There is a debate in the wider sector about whether physician associates (previously called physician assistants) should be statutory regulated. Although there is no Government policy that they should be, there has been an increase in education commissioning for this role. Some argue that statutory regulation is essential given their scope of practice and because this

role will only be able to fully contribute to the health system with access to medicines entitlements only open to those who are regulated.

- It has been suggested that either the HCPC or the General Medical Council (GMC) should be the regulator for this group (should they be regulated).
- A joint stakeholder roundtable meeting with the GMC took place on 3 May 2016 to discuss the issues around the potential regulation of this group. A verbal update will be given at the Council meeting.

### **Professional accountability bill (legislative reform)**

- Since the Council meeting in February 2016, the regulators' policy leads and the chief executives have separately met with officials from the Department of Health. The purpose of the meetings was to update us about the proposed timescale for a public consultation and to engage the regulators in preliminary discussion on the content of the consultation.
- Key points discussed at the policy leads meeting are as follows.
  - The proposed timetable is similar to that outlined in the paper at the last Council meeting – a four country government consultation on the principles informing legislation (rather than legislation itself) is planned from October 2016 with the Governments' response published from April 2017. Officials would around this time seek to secure parliamentary time and a commitment in the Queen's speech for pre-legislative scrutiny on proposed legislation.
  - The DH are talking about a 'framework bill' which would be shorter than that proposed by the Law Commissions, with less prescription for the regulators on the face of the Bill and more in Rules or left to be determined as policy by the regulators themselves.
  - There was general discussion at the meeting about issues including the role of regulators in quality control versus quality improvement; the factors involved in determining whether a profession should be regulated; and risk.
- In March the Executive also attended a meeting of the regulators' policy leads with officials at the Scottish Government. We discussed similar issues to those described the bullet point above. No further Department of Health or Scottish Government meetings with the regulators have yet been arranged.
- The Executive will keep the Council updated with any developments in this area.

## **Review of the standards of education and training**

- The fourth meeting of the PLG took place in March 2016. The work has progressed well and is on course to report to the Education and Training Committee and the Council at their meetings in June and July 2016.

## **Research**

The following provides an update about some of the research activities managed by the Department.

- **Costs and impact of CPD (Newcastle University; commissioned by the Department of Health)**  
A survey of a sample of 11,000 registrants has been completed. We have seen and commented on an early draft of the final report.

- **Understanding the prevalence of fitness to practise cases about paramedics and social workers in England.**  
Following a competitive tender process, the University of Surrey has been appointed to undertake this work.

Michael Guthrie gave a presentation on the proposed research at the PSA research conference in Windsor on the 11 March 2016.

## **Department resourcing**

- Edward Tynan (11 May) and Laura Coveney (13 May), Policy Officers, have both left the organisation for new roles elsewhere. Recruitment for replacement roles is underway.