
Consultation on draft guidance on ‘Health, disability and becoming a health and care professional’

A consultation seeking the views of stakeholders on draft guidance for disabled people about becoming a health and care professional regulated by the HCPC

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This consultation seeks the views of our stakeholders on draft guidance for disabled people about becoming a health and care professional regulated by the HCPC. The guidance also includes information for education providers involved in education and training in the professions we regulate.
- 1.2 This draft guidance we are consulting on is an update of previous guidance we first published in 2006: 'A disabled person's guide to becoming a health professional.'¹ We have explained later in this consultation document the changes and improvements we have made to the existing guidance (see section four).
- 1.3 The consultation will run from **1 October 2014 to 16 January 2015**.

2. About the HCPC

- 2.1 We are a regulator and were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of professionals who meet our standards for their professional skills and behaviour. Individuals on our register are called 'registrants'.
- 2.2 We currently regulate 16 professions.
- Arts therapists
 - Biomedical scientists
 - Chiropodists / podiatrists
 - Clinical scientists
 - Dietitians
 - Hearing aid dispensers
 - Occupational therapists
 - Operating department practitioners
 - Orthoptists
 - Paramedics
 - Physiotherapists
 - Practitioner psychologists

¹ Health Professions Council (2006). A disabled person's guide to becoming a health professional. <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/brochures/index.asp?id=111>

- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Social workers in England
- Speech and language therapists

3. Reviewing the existing guidance

- 3.1 The existing guidance – ‘A disabled person’s guide to becoming a health professional’ – was put together by a working group called the ‘Health, Disability and Registration Professional Liaison Group (PLG)’. The guidance was also the subject of a public consultation and was published in 2006.
- 3.2 The primary aim of the guidance was – and still is – to provide information to disabled people to help overcome any perceived boundaries to disabled people becoming qualified in their chosen profession and becoming registered with us. The guidance also includes information for staff working for approved education providers about their responsibilities when making decisions about disabled applicants and students.
- 3.3 We have reviewed the existing guidance for a number of reasons including the following.
- Since the publication of the guidance, in England, Wales and Scotland the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and other related legislation have been replaced by the Equality Act 2010.
 - The number of professions we regulate has increased from 13 to 16 since the guidance was published. We have also changed our name to reflect our enlarged remit.
 - The guidance required updating to take account of changes to the HCPC’s standards, guidance, policy and practice. For example, the health reference requirement for entry to the Register has been replaced with a self-declaration.
 - We also wanted to review the guidance to improve it overall – to make sure that it was as helpful as possible in providing information to disabled people which would help them in becoming health and care professionals, and in supporting education providers in this area.

- 3.4 To help us in doing this, we commissioned the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences and the Welfare and Disabilities Team at Coventry University to undertake some research for us.² This included interviews and focus groups with 48 disabled students. They also interviewed admissions tutors, educators, practice placement educators, staff in disability support services and employers. They made a number of recommendations to us about the style and content of the guidance and also made suggestions for how we might better disseminate it when the revised guidance is published. They also produced a range of written and video case studies with disabled students and staff involved in education and training talking about their experiences.
- 3.5 We are enormously grateful to all those who participated in the research.

4. The draft revised guidance

- 4.1 We have used the findings of the research to put together the draft guidance for consultation.
- 4.2 We have made a number of changes to improve the style and content of the guidance, including the following.
- We have included up-to-date information in section one about the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as it applies in Northern Ireland.
 - We have restructured section two for disabled people to more closely follow the journey of someone interested in becoming a health and care professional – from applying to an approved programme through to registration and seeking employment. We have also included a flow diagram which has been updated to follow this journey.
 - We have added more information to section two to reflect the findings of the research – including more encouragement for disabled people to disclose their disabilities to approved programmes and practice placement providers; a new section on practice placements; and information about alternative pathways, highlighting that other avenues that may be available to disabled people and emphasising the positive contribution disabled people can make to the health and care professions.

² Coventry University (2014). Enhancing Guidance for Disabled People Wanting to Become Health and Social Care Professionals

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/research/index.asp?id=896>

- We have expanded section three for education providers to include other staff involved in education and training, such as practice placement educators. We have also reordered this section to more logically follow the decisions that education providers need to make at each stage of a programme.
- We have also added information in section three about making reasonable adjustments which provides more guidance about the way in which education providers might consider the adjustments they can put in place.
- We have updated the examples used in the guidance and included some of the case studies (adapted) which were developed in the research. We plan to publish full versions of these case studies on our website when the guidance is finally published.
- We have removed the list of contact details for other useful organisations from the guidance. This will be included on our website when the guidance is published instead so that it can be more easily updated.
- We have generally updated the language used in the guidance to make it easier to read and to make sure that the content is up-to-date with changes to the HCPC's role, standards and policy.

4.3 Once the consultation has concluded, we will use the comments we receive to improve the draft guidance further. We will then work with the Plain English Campaign to edit the guidance. We then plan to publish it on our website (in a dedicated section) as well as in hard copy and in a variety of other accessible formats. We will want to promote the guidance to all those stakeholders who will be interested in it.

5. How to respond to the consultation

5.1 We welcome your comments on the draft guidance. We have listed some questions to help you below. The questions are not designed to be exhaustive and we would welcome your comments on any aspect of the guidance.

Q.1 Is the guidance clear and easy to understand? How could we improve it?

Q.2 Could any parts of the guidance be reworded or removed?

Q.3 Do you have any other comments on the draft guidance?

5.2 You can respond to this consultation in the following ways.

- By completing our easy-to-use online survey:
<https://www.research.net/s/consultationhealthdisabilityguidance>
- By emailing us at: consultation@hcpc-uk.org.
- By writing to us at the following address.

Consultation on disability guidance
Policy and Standards Department
Health and Care Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU
Fax: +44(0)20 7820 9684

5.3 Please note that we do not normally accept responses by telephone or in person. We normally ask that consultation responses are made in writing. However, if you are unable to respond in writing, please contact us on +44(0)20 7840 9815 to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help you to respond.

5.4 Please complete the online survey or send us your response by **16 January 2015**.

5.5 **Please contact us to request a copy of this document in Welsh or in an alternative format.**

5.6 Once the consultation period is completed, we will analyse the responses we receive. We will then publish a document which summarises the comments we received and explains the decisions we have taken as a result. This will be published on our website.