

Council, 7 July 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

This paper is to note.

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

14 June 2016

Policy and Standards Department report – 7 July 2016

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

Consultations

- The consultation on revised standards of proficiency for social workers in England closed on 24 June 2016. The outcomes and revised standards are due to be considered by the Education and Training Committee and the Council at their meetings in September 2016.

Department resourcing

- We have been successful in appointing to the vacant policy officer positions. Both appointed candidates start in early July 2016.

Guidance on social media use

- The online discussion forum ('crowdsourcing') ran between 10 May 2016 and 25 May 2016. There were 313 participants (mostly registrants) and 2,081 contributions (ideas, comments, likes and dislikes).
- The results of the online discussion will inform draft guidance for public consultation, which is due to be brought to the Education and Training Committee and the Council at their meetings in September 2016.

Professional Standards Authority (PSA) performance review 2015-16

- The PSA's annual performance review is underway.
- The following has happened to date.
 - Performance data has been submitted.
 - We have answered a series of questions on our performance against the PSA's standards for good regulation.
 - We have met with the PSA to discuss the review.
 - The PSA has audited a sample of registration appeal decisions.
- We anticipate being in receipt of a draft report of our performance review in the near future.

Registration and fees and Practice Committee Rules changes

- At its meeting in March 2016, the Council agreed amendments to these Rules. The changes included removing the character reference requirement for

registration and the ability of fitness to practise panel chairs to make directions where appropriate without the need for a preliminary hearing.

- The amendment Rules have now been validated by the Department of Health and Scottish Government and have been sealed by the Chief Executive and Chair. They will be laid in both the Scottish and Westminster parliaments. At this stage we anticipate that the Rules, if approved, will become effective in the next session of both parliaments in September 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)**

The final report has been submitted to the Department of Health and we understand it will now be peer reviewed.

- **Understanding the prevalence of fitness to practise cases about paramedics and social workers in England.**

The contract has been signed and a meeting took place with the research team on 1 June 2016 to commence the project.

Michael Guthrie had a comment piece on the role of prevention in professional regulation published in the journal 'Nursing Ethics' in May 2016. The piece describes the rationale for the research.

Revised objective

- The Council were previously advised of the Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015. This Act was the result of a private member's bill and amends legislation to introduce a consistent overarching objective for the professional regulators.

- The legislation reads

'The over-arching objective of the Authority in exercising its functions...is the protection of the public.'

'The pursuit by the Authority of its over-arching objective involves the pursuit of the following objectives—

- (a) to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of the public;
- (b) to promote and maintain public confidence in the professions regulated by the regulatory bodies;
- (c) to promote and maintain proper professional standards and conduct for members of those professions'

- The provisions above are not currently in force. The Department of Health have recently advised that they intend to introduce a commencement order to introduce these provisions in the near future. We will update the Council once we have further information about likely timescales.
- We previously advised the Council that we did not consider that the new objective would have any significant impact on our day-to-day work. Recent legal opinion has confirmed this. The wording is consistent with that already included in the Health and Social Work Professions Order 2001 and used in the operational processes such as fitness to practise.