

10 April 2014

Dear Joy,

I am writing to you as Chair of the Education Panel which considered the Frontline programme and the approval process on 27 March.

HCPC's Chief executive and Chair, Marc Seale and Anna van der Gaag met with officials from both the Department for Health and the Department for Education last week and it is at their invitation that I am writing to you to ask that you reconsider the Panel's decision to revisit the Frontline programme within two to three months, so that a visit could be held in mid-May. As you would expect, we have taken the Visitors' feedback seriously making substantial changes to documents to meet your standards. We have commissioned a number of independent reviews of the paperwork and we are confident that we are able to meet your standards for approval. Without this confidence I would not be asking for an earlier date for the visit.

I understand that there can be lengthy delays to the process if a complaint is lodged. I would therefore like to make clear at the outset that this letter is not intended as a form of complaint. If at any point it is considered in a way that halts or delays the approval process, then I would ask that you consider the letter to be withdrawn.

I am aware that the Panel took the decision to hold a further visit to gather evidence of how the programme would meet the standards within two to three months. We have subsequently been informed that the visit is planned for 3 June. This letter is intended to make you aware of consequences that may not have been fully considered on 27 March when the Education Department were instructed to undertake a re-visit within two to three months. These consequences are serious enough for me to write to you with the hope that the decision may be reconsidered as a matter of urgency by you as the Chair and your fellow committee members.

I understand that committee members at the meeting on 27 March stated that they were "keen to be responsive to the needs of the education provider" and "not cause undue delay." However, the Panel's decision to hold a further visit two to three months from the meeting has resulted in a date of 3 June for the visit, making it very difficult for us to deliver the programme to the planned timetable. This leaves an extremely short window between the visit taking place and before the 20 June paper deadline for the Panel to receive the recommendation from visitors. If there are a small number of further conditions we may need to provide visitors with additional or adjusted documents within this time.

In order to avoid the risk of cancellation at short notice, Frontline will need to take an impending decision to cancel the planned start date. The costs of this decision are expected to be at least £500,000 through a combination of extending bursaries, breaking or adjusting contracts with partners including venue providers and the disruption caused to the programme team. These are hugely significant cash costs for a publicly-funded programme. This is in addition to significant disruption that will be caused to 18 local authority partners, 27 Consultant Social Workers, and over 100 carefully selected participants who are set to begin their social work training.

Our concern relates only to the timescales and the impact that the 3 June revisit date will have on the participants we have recruited and the partners we work with. By moving the proposed date earlier by a matter of weeks we will avoid significant disruption and cost to the programme. Holding the visit in mid-May would allow for the programme team and the visitors to exchange any further documents or requests with a realistic prospect that this could be done before 20 June.

I hope the information enclosed gives you a fuller insight into the impact of holding the next visit at such a late date and I hope that you are able to reconsider the direction given from the Panel to the Education Department.

The entire Frontline team remains fully committed to providing documents to the visiting team as soon as they need them and to continuing to work collaboratively with the Education Department at HCPC to reach an outcome that allows for a thorough review of the new documents, a productive re-visit and the avoidance of disruption to the programme as outlined above. I believe that this is possible and I hope a decision can be made quickly to make this a reality. I am of course happy to discuss any of this at greater length whilst being mindful that time is limited and that there are significant costs and disruption looming over the programme.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh MacAlister', written in a cursive style.

Josh MacAlister

Chief Executive