Education and Training Committee, 6 September 2018

Updates to the HCPC programme concerns process

1. Introduction

1.1 The programme concerns process allows anyone to raise a concern about an approved programme, and for the HCPC to investigate issues that may impact how approved programmes continue to meet our relevant education standards.

1.2 There are several potential outcomes of the programme concern process, with the Executive making a recommendation, and the Committee making the decision on how to proceed. Normally, issues raised are addressed through the process, and there is no further case to answer for education providers.

1.3 In line with the Department's work plan for 2017-18, we have reviewed and updated the programme concerns process as laid out in this paper. Changes flagged through this paper are minor, and usually to formalise existing practices within the process, and therefore this paper is to note. The Executive is also recommending a change to the Committee Rules to allow programme concern reports to be considered by the Education and Training Committee (Panel) in a separate paper.

2. Intentions of the review

2.1 We undertook this review to ensure that the process is fit for purpose. Specifically, to ensure we:
- give correct and consistent advice to stakeholders;
- ask for the right information to apply a fair investigation, and make a good recommendation to the Committee;
- share information with the Fitness to Practise Department along an agreed process; and
- be clear about timeframes, and streamline the process where possible.

3. Minor changes / updates to the process

3.1 We have developed the process in specific ways. The majority of the updates below were made to formalise informal practices:
- updating information for those raising concerns about, to ensure it is clearer what we can consider via the process;
- signposting, and / or directly referring, to other organisations where issues may be more appropriately investigated;
- explicitly asking the case contact to provide any relevant supporting evidence along with their programme concern notification form;
- formalising the process of handover between the Education and Fitness to Practise functions of the organisation;

- formally documenting our decision about whether to investigate a concern;
- publicising expected investigation and decision timeframes;
- tweaked the executive recommendation (and Committee decision), to be clear that is possible to:
  - resolve the concern investigation, as issues have been dealt with through the investigation, or there was no case to answer
  - resolve a programme concern investigation but extend an existing process to cover off any remaining (minor) issues, or
  - continue the programme concern investigation via a directed approval visit.

3.2 Changes noted above have been facilitated in part by new supporting documentation, such as guidance documents for members of the executive, pro-forma, and pending systems updates.

4. Communication activities

4.1 In our recent survey of education providers:
- 11 per cent of respondents did not know about the programme concerns process;
- a third did not tell any of their stakeholders that the process exists; and
- almost a fifth did not know where to find information about the process.

4.2 We will ensure that the revised process is rolled out so relevant stakeholders have access to information that may be useful to them. Specifically, we:
- will include an article in September Education Update, noting that education providers should inform their stakeholders of the process;
- have rewritten the programme concern process web page as part of the Web Review major project, and updated the existing web page with these updates; and
- will reference the process in the specific learner audience pages on the website.

5. Rollout activities

5.1 The revised process, along with supporting guidance and information, was rolled out to the Education Department in August 2018.

6. Decision

6.1 No decision is required, this paper is to note.

Background information

http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/concerns/

Resource implications
None

Financial implications
None

Appendices
None

Date of paper
9 August 2018