

THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL  
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PROFESSIONAL LIAISON GROUP FOR HEALTH, DISABILITY  
AND REGISTRATION

Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Professional Liaison Group for Health, Disability and Registration held at 11:00am on Tuesday 21 June 2005 at The Evangelical Alliance, Meeting Room 1, 186 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BT.

PRESENT:

Miss M Crawford Chairman  
Mrs K Atkinson Representative of Allied Health Professions Federation  
Ms K Goddard Policy Officer, Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities  
Ms P McClure Lecturer, University of Ulster  
Ms J White Acting Director – Quality & Standards, Health Professions Wales  
Ms A Wood Representative of Allied Health Professions Federation

IN ATTENDANCE:

Miss S Butcher Secretary to the PLG  
Mrs R Phillip Registration Officer, International & Grandparenting  
Ms R Tripp Policy Manager, HPC

Item 1.05/33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following; Ms S Chaudhry, Dr R Jones, Ms D Keetch, Mr V McKay, Ms P Simkiss and Dr S Yule.

Item 2.05/34 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 2.1 The Professional Liaison Group for Health, Disability and Registration approved the agenda.

Item 3.05/35 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The Chairman welcomed all members to their fourth and final meeting as the Professional Liaison Group for Health, Disability and Registration. The Chairman thanked Ms R Tripp for her continued hard work and contributions in the creation of the final draft of its two key documents; Information about the Health Reference and Becoming a Health Professional.

- 3.2 The Chairman reported that a meeting would shortly be arranged between representatives of the professional body for Occupational Therapists and Ms Tripp to discuss the documents as produced by this PLG. It was hoped that such meetings with professional bodies would aid joint and complementary working, and elicit positive case studies of disabled health professionals.

Item 4.05/36 MINUTES OF THE PLG – HEALTH, DISABILITY AND REGISTRATION HELD ON 26 APRIL 2005

- 4.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the third meeting of the PLG Health, Disability and Registration be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 5.05/37 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 Matters Arising

The Group noted that both documents were to be produced in a full range of formats, these included Braille and on tape. The document would also be standardised in a 14 sans serif font and made available in Welsh in line with all of the other key

documents that HPC produced. These could be accessed via the publications index on the HPC website.

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### Item 6.05/38 INFORMATION ABOUT THE HEALTH REFERENCE

- 6.1 The Professional Liaison Group received a paper for discussion from the Policy Manager.
- 6.2 The Chairman explained that the two documents, (subject to any further amendments made by the Group) would go to the next Council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 recommending consultation as the next phase. Ms Tripp reported that as far as possible she had incorporated all comments as made by members of this Group. Additional changes had also been made by HPC's legal advisors for the Group's discussion. The Group reviewed the document 'Information about the Health Reference' section by section:
- 6.3 The Group discussed why no reference to the term disability had been made on the front page of 'Information about the health reference' when it had been made on the second document 'Becoming a health professional'. The Group agreed to add an additional question.
- P7 Ms Tripp reported that the second paragraph had been changed, the word 'struck off' was replaced with 'disciplined' and this was consistent with the wording on the application form.
- P7 In the example given about the occupational therapist the Group recommended that 'off work' was replaced by 'on sick leave'.
- P8 Philippa Simkiss had forwarded her comments via email for possible amendments : 'These include accessibility and reasonable adjustments *in recruitment, selection and employment.*'

- P8 The Group agreed that in the third paragraph the following inclusion should be made as it was important to demonstrate that there was an element of choice involved in the process ‘.....someone who meets all of our standards for their profession may not or *may not ever choose to work* in some areas of that profession.’
- P8 The Group discussed whether further information was needed about how individuals can meet and maintain their Standards of Proficiency. The Group acknowledged that there were a variety of ways in which this was achieved. As the vast majority of health professionals were in statutory employment within NHS Trusts such requirements would be an integral part of their contractual agreement. The Group therefore agreed that no further information was required.
- P9 The Group discussed the term ‘assistant’ and were in agreement that clarification was needed to make the difference clear between a personal assistant, and an assistant practitioner. For the purposes of the sixth paragraph on page 9 it was agreed that ‘personal’ assistant was included for its thorough definition. In addition the various forms of assistant would be defined and included in the glossary.
- P9 The Group discussed the ways in which individuals in a variety of educational and or employment settings would meet the Standards of Proficiency. The Group agreed that a consultation question was needed on this subject so to gauge what issues there were specifically for those who are or were employed in a private practice setting and what levels of support were provided outside of the employment structure. Ms Tripp reported that she would collate the consultation questions as identified and e-mail them to all members of the Group for their comment.

Action: RT

- P11 The Group noted that the example provided regarding an occupational therapist was more succinct in the second document 'Becoming a registered health professional'. The Group therefore recommended that the version in the second document replaced this one so it read: 'An occupational therapist with multiple sclerosis had a relapse....'
- P11 The Group noted that access to work had not been referenced in the glossary and agreed for its inclusion with a signpost to the following website: [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk).
- P12 The Group agreed that the second from last paragraph regarding an applicant's medical records and their ability to practice would better fit with the third paragraph as it related also to their scope of practice.
- P14 The Group discussed the section regarding disabilities and the health reference and noted that the use of such words as impairment might convey a negative attitude. Most Group members noted however that impairment was an accepted term as used by the Disability Rights Commission and therefore recommended for its reference to remain. The Group also noted that part of the documents function was to make it clear that there were different debates about disabilities and how these views could impact upon someone's health reference.
- P15 The Group made the following changes so that this section read as follows: *'whether the doctor feels sufficiently informed and/or is willing to complete the character reference is the personal decision of the doctor.'*
- P16 The Group agreed to the following amendment to the section 'Good Health' so that it read: *'When you complete your patient's health reference, you do not need to assess whether they are 'healthy'. This is because someone may be unwell, or may have a condition for which they need treatment or may have a disability which they manage with reasonable adjustments but nevertheless be able to practice their profession safely.'*

- P17 The Group agreed that the word 'medical' was removed from the example given. The Group also noted that the Disability Discrimination Act should be highlighted for Doctors who are to sign the health reference.
- P18 The Group discussed the fifth paragraph and made the following changes so that it read: '...This means that you are protected under the Disability Discrimination Act part 3....'
- P19 The Group agreed that the example given was not one that could be clearly identified as a mental health issue and felt that this should be made more explicit. The Group felt that all of the examples given so far were good but that a specific third mental health example was required. The Disability Discrimination Act only covered long term mental illnesses that lasted for a period of 12 months or more and valid examples of these could be most readily demonstrated either through a psychotic illness or depression. Depression was noted as a common form of mental illness and one which the HPC received a lot of queries about. Substance misuse was also highlighted as a major issue within the health professions sector. The Group discussed whether alcoholism was an example of a mental health condition and acknowledged that whilst alcoholism was a very valid case in point it was not covered by the Disability Discrimination Act. For this reason it was agreed that a footnote would be provided alerting people to this fact.

Action: RT

- P22 The Group discussed the implications for patients when doctors do not give their consent and that it would be good to create a signpost to indicate where this information can be found in the second document.
- P24 The Group agreed to the following changes in the first paragraph 'If you need to tell us about your concerns' '...may in certain circumstances inform us...'

P27 Section 3. Information for applicants.

Ms Tripp reported that following advice given from one of the registered medical practitioners on the fitness to practice committees a sentence would be included to state that applicants should enquire how much their doctor would charge for the completion of the health reference.

P27 The Disability Discrimination Act and disabled people.

Ms Tripp reported that Ms Simkiss had recommended for the first paragraph in this section to come earlier in the document, at the top of page 8. The website was also suggested for inclusion for further information: [www.disability.gov.uk](http://www.disability.gov.uk).

P29 The Group agreed that it needed to be made clear in the third paragraph that if their own doctor would not sign their reference and therefore needed to approach another doctor for its completion they must ensure the alternative Doctor had access to the applicant's medical records.

P34 The Group agreed that reference was needed to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) Codes of Practice which covered the Disability Discrimination Act but was noted as a more user friendly aid.

P33 The Group noted that Jean White's title should be amended to read: 'Director - Quality and Standards.'

P37 The Group also noted that whilst Prosthetist was in the glossary, Orthotist was not and needed to be cross referenced.

Item 7.05/39 BECOMING A REGISTERED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

P1 The Group discussed whether it was necessary to identify specific professions in the questions posed. Ms Tripp reported that this had been done so that potential applicants could relate to the document. Terms such as 'allied health professionals' were not widely known. The group recognised this was compounded by the difficulty of giving equal representation to the thirteen professions that HPC

regulates. The Group agreed that this should be flagged up as a consultation question so to clarify what information applicants required most? Professional bodies would also provide feedback.

The Group noted that the DDA duties as detailed on page 15 should be put earlier on in the document. The Group noted that Part 4 of the DDA was also known as 'SENDA' and was still quoted as such by many universities. In Northern Ireland it is known as 'SEND0' and will be covered by the DDA as of September 2005. Reference to the universities codes of practice QAA would be incorporated under the section about Education Providers.

P8 Becoming a health professional: flow-chart

The Group discussed whether the two central boxes were the right way around and noted that the order in which these processes happened was dependent upon when an applicant discloses, and so could vary. The Group noted that the chart had been created to demonstrate an overview of the whole process of becoming a health professional.

The Group discussed the difficulties of incorporating the detail of the document into the chart without it becoming ineffective. It was noted that some people with dyslexia would find diagrams easier to read and absorb the information provided.

P8 The Group agreed to amend the wording provided in the fifth box down so that it read: 'The education provider contacts them to discuss its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act, including reasonable adjustments if appropriate.'

P15 The Group agreed that the example was amended so that it read: '*Other examples of registrants who may make adjustments to meet this standard include a registrant who is visually impaired who uses a Dictaphone or adapted laptop computer to help them take their notes..*' Ms Tripp reported that she has intended the example to show how all registrants made adjustments to their practice, not only those who were disabled.. The Group agreed that dyspraxia (developmental co-ordination disorder) should be added to the example.



- P19 The responsibilities of applicants  
The Group discussed the first paragraph and agreed that the following changes were made *'The University has a responsibility to provide multiple opportunities for you to disclose in a safe and confidential manner.'*
- P21 What if I think I have been treated unfairly?  
The Group noted that the HPC were not in a position to give legal advice but that signposts to those organizations that could advise had therefore been listed. A link to SKILL, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities was required in this section.
- P22 The Group agreed that the fifth paragraph relating to funding should also include reference to the fact that the institution may have access to funds for overseas students.
- P23 Replace 'impair' with 'effect'. The Group also discussed a possible scenario when the occupational health check meant that a place on the course could no longer be offered.
- P24 The Group agreed that a note should be added:  
*'NB. Employers are obliged under the Disability Discrimination Act not to treat people less favourably in recruitment and selection because of disability.'*
- P25 Change 'happy' to 'able'.
- P29 The Group discussed the second paragraph where it implied that employers may make assumptions about the difficulties disabled people may incur within their working environment. The Group agreed that some sort of advice should be made available to enable disabled people to deal with such situations effectively. It was agreed that this would be flagged as a consultation question so that a variety of views and information could be obtained.
- P29 The Group discussed the third from last paragraph and noted that an assumption had been made that disabled people knew what

levels of support were required. This was frequently found to not be the case and agreed that additional text was needed.

P31 The Group agreed that it was not correct protocol to advise that students could give informal assistance. Rather, it was proposed that it would be changed to 'offering a pre-placement visit with the University Disability Officer to accompany them.'

P33 QAA codes to be referenced at the top of the page.

P35 Remove the hyphen from 'reasonableness'. The Group agreed that it needed to be highlighted to the fact that as the universities had access to the student's pro-forma under the Data Protection Act they were bound by a duty of confidentiality.

The Group noted the fact that the National Disability Team would be disbanded as of November this year. Kate Goddard would inform Ms Tripp to the new team's title before the documents' anticipated publication in late 2005.

The Group agreed for the inclusion of a reference to the Equality Challenge Unit which was HEFC funded.

The two documents would be amended for inclusion of the Groups comments. Council will then be asked to ratify the documents with the recommendation to go to consultation. Ms Tripp reported that she was investigating whether she could launch the documents at a workshop at which members of the group would be very welcome to take part in discussions. Ms Goddard reported that the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities would be holding a conference for Disability Officers in December 2005 at which these documents could additionally be promoted.

## Item 8.05/40 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 There was no other business.

8.2 The Chairman thanked all members of the Group and especially to Ms Tripp for all of her hard work and dedication to the writing of the

documents. All members looked forward to the documents production in their final form.

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2005-06-21	a	SEC	MIN	PLGHealth,Disability & Registration Meeting 21June2005	Final DD: None	Public RD: None



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