
Your duties as a registrant

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics

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Registrants must:

- promote and protect the interests of service users and carers;
- communicate appropriately and effectively;
- work within the limits of their knowledge and skills;
- delegate appropriately;
- respect confidentiality;
- manage risk;
- report concerns about safety;
- be open when things go wrong;
- be honest and trustworthy; and
- keep records of their work.

Introduction

About us

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of professionals who meet our standards for their professional skills, knowledge and behaviour. The people on our register are referred to as 'registrants'.

About this document

This document sets out the standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The standards set out, in general terms, how we expect registrants to behave.

We currently regulate the following 15 professions.

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists / podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Hearing aid dispensers
- Occupational therapists
- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Speech and language therapists

Our registrants work in a range of different settings, which include direct practice, management, education, research and roles in industry. They also work with a variety of different people, including patients, clients, carers and other professionals.

In this document we have tried to use terms which everyone can understand. Some terms which have a specific meaning in this guide are explained in the glossary at the end of this booklet.

What the standards mean for different groups

Service users, carers and the public

If you are receiving care, treatment or other services from one of our registrants, or you might do so in the future, the standards will help you to understand how our registrants should behave towards you. The standards will also be helpful if you are a carer.

On the rare occasions that something goes wrong, anyone can raise a concern through our fitness to practise process (see page 11). We can take action when there are serious concerns about a health and care professional's knowledge, skills or behaviour.

We use the standards of conduct, performance and ethics to help us decide whether we need to take action to protect the public.

Registrants and applicants

If you are registered with us, you must make sure that you are familiar with the standards and that you continue to meet them. If you are applying to be registered, you will need to sign a declaration to confirm that you will keep to the standards once you are registered.

As a registrant, you are personally responsible for the way you behave. You will need to use your judgement so that you make informed and reasonable decisions and meet the standards. You must always be prepared to justify your decisions and actions.

Making informed and reasonable decisions might include getting advice and support from colleagues, education providers, employers, professional bodies, trade unions or other people. In particular, we recognise the valuable role professional bodies play in representing and promoting the interests of their members. This often includes providing guidance and advice about good practice, which can help you meet the standards.

Students

The standards also apply to you if you are a student on an HCPC-approved programme. We have published another document, 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students', which sets out what the standards mean for you.

The standards

1. Promote and protect the interests of service users and carers

Treat service users and carers with respect

- 1.1 You must treat service users and carers as individuals, respecting their privacy and dignity.
- 1.2 You must work in partnership with service users and carers, involving them, where appropriate, in decisions about the care, treatment or other services to be provided.
- 1.3 You must encourage and help service users, where appropriate, to maintain their own health and well-being, and support them so they can make informed decisions.

Make sure you have consent

- 1.4 You must make sure that you have consent from service users or other appropriate authority before you provide care, treatment or other services.

Challenge discrimination

- 1.5 You must not discriminate against service users, carers or colleagues by allowing your personal views to affect your professional relationships or the care, treatment or other services that you provide.
- 1.6 You must challenge colleagues if you think that they have discriminated against, or are discriminating against, service users, carers and colleagues.

Maintain appropriate boundaries

- 1.7 You must keep your relationships with service users and carers professional.

2 Communicate appropriately and effectively

Communicate with service users and carers

- 2.1 You must be polite and considerate.
- 2.2 You must listen to service users and carers and take account of their needs and wishes.
- 2.3 You must give service users and carers the information they want or need, in a way they can understand.
- 2.4 You must make sure that, where possible, arrangements are made to meet service users' and carers' language and communication needs.

Work with colleagues

- 2.5 You must work in partnership with colleagues, sharing your skills, knowledge and experience where appropriate, for the benefit of service users and carers.
- 2.6 You must share relevant information, where appropriate, with colleagues involved in the care, treatment or other services provided to a service user.

Social media and networking websites

- 2.7 You must use all forms of communication appropriately and responsibly, including social media and networking websites.

3 Work within the limits of your knowledge and skills

Keep within your scope of practice

- 3.1 You must keep within your scope of practice by only practising in the areas you have appropriate knowledge, skills and experience for.
- 3.2 You must refer a service user to another practitioner if the care, treatment or other services they need are beyond your scope of practice.

Maintain and develop your knowledge and skills

- 3.3 You must keep your knowledge and skills up to date and relevant to your scope of practice through continuing professional development.
- 3.4 You must keep up to date with and follow the law, our guidance and other requirements relevant to your practice.
- 3.5 You must ask for feedback and use it to improve your practice.

4 Delegate appropriately

Delegation, oversight and support

- 4.1 You must only delegate work to someone who has the knowledge, skills and experience needed to carry it out safely and effectively.
- 4.2 You must continue to provide appropriate supervision and support to those you delegate work to.

5 Respect confidentiality

Using information

- 5.1 You must treat information about service users as confidential.

Disclosing information

- 5.2 You must only disclose confidential information if:
 - you have permission;
 - the law allows this;
 - it is in the service user’s best interests; or
 - it is in the public interest, such as if it is necessary to protect public safety or prevent harm to other people.

6 Manage risk

Identify and minimise risk

- 6.1 You must take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of harm to service users, carers and colleagues as far as possible.
- 6.2 You must not do anything, or allow someone else to do anything, which could put the health or safety of a service user, carer or colleague at unacceptable risk.

Manage your health

- 6.3 You must make changes to how you practise, or stop practising, if your physical or mental health may affect your performance or judgement, or put others at risk for any other reason.

7 Report concerns about safety

Report concerns

- 7.1 You must report any concerns about the safety or well-being of service users promptly and appropriately.
- 7.2 You must support and encourage others to report concerns and not prevent anyone from raising concerns.
- 7.3 You must take appropriate action if you have concerns about the safety or well-being of children or vulnerable adults.
- 7.4 You must make sure that the safety and well-being of service users always comes before any professional or other loyalties.

Follow up concerns

- 7.5 You must follow up concerns you have reported and, if necessary, escalate them.
- 7.6 You must acknowledge and act on concerns raised to you, investigating, escalating or dealing with those concerns where it is appropriate for you to do so.

8 Be open when things go wrong

Openness with service users and carers

- 8.1 You must be open and honest when something has gone wrong with the care, treatment or other services that you provide by:
- informing service users or, where appropriate, their carers, that something has gone wrong;
 - apologising;
 - taking action to put matters right if possible; and
 - making sure that service users or, where appropriate, their carers, receive a full and prompt explanation of what has happened and any likely effects.

Deal with concerns and complaints

- 8.2 You must support service users and carers who want to raise concerns about the care, treatment or other services they have received.
- 8.3 You must give a helpful and honest response to anyone who complains about the care, treatment or other services they have received.

9 Be honest and trustworthy

Personal and professional behaviour

- 9.1 You must make sure that your conduct justifies the public's trust and confidence in you and your profession.
- 9.2 You must be honest about your experience, qualifications and skills.
- 9.3 You must make sure that any promotional activities you are involved in are accurate and are not likely to mislead.
- 9.4 You must declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and make sure that they do not influence your judgement.

Important information about your conduct and competence

- 9.5 You must tell us as soon as possible if:
- you accept a caution from the police or you have been charged with, or found guilty of, a criminal offence;
 - another organisation responsible for regulating a health or social-care profession has taken action or made a finding against you; or
 - you have had any restriction placed on your practice, or been suspended or dismissed by an employer, because of concerns about your conduct or competence.
- 9.6 You must co-operate with any investigation into your conduct or competence, the conduct or competence of others, or the care, treatment or other services provided to service users.

10 Keep records of your work

Keep accurate records

- 10.1 You must keep full, clear, and accurate records for everyone you care for, treat, or provide other services to.
- 10.2 You must complete all records promptly and as soon as possible after providing care, treatment or other services.

Keep records secure

- 10.3 You must keep records secure by protecting them from loss, damage or inappropriate access.

Fitness to practise

When we say someone is 'fit to practise', we mean that they have the skills, knowledge, character and health they need to practise their profession safely and effectively.

We can consider concerns which members of the public, employers, professionals, the police and other people raise about a registrant's fitness to practise. When we are deciding whether we need to take any action against a registrant to protect the public, we look at whether the registrant has met these standards.

You can find out more information about our fitness to practise process in our brochures 'How to raise a concern' and 'What happens if a concern is raised about me'. You can download these from our website at www.hcpc-uk.org, or you can phone us on 020 7840 9806 to ask for a copy.

Glossary

Apologising

Making it clear that you are sorry about what has happened. The HCPC does not regard an apology, of itself, as an admission of liability or wrongdoing.

Carer

Anyone who looks after, or provides support to, a family member, partner or friend.

Care, treatment or other services

A general term to describe the different work that our registrants carry out.

Colleague

Other health and care professionals, students and trainees, support workers, professional carers and others involved in providing care, treatment or other services to service users.

Conduct

A health and care professional's behaviour.

Consent

Permission for a registrant to provide care, treatment or other services, given by a service user, or someone acting on their behalf, after receiving all the information they reasonably need to make that decision.

Delegate

To ask someone else to carry out a task on your behalf.

Disclose

In these standards, this refers to making a formal decision to share information about a service user with others, such as the police.

Discriminate

To unfairly treat a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people. This includes treating others differently because of your views about their lifestyle, culture or their social or economic status, as well as the characteristics protected by law – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Escalate

To pass on a concern about a service user's safety or well-being to someone who is better able to act on it, for example, a more senior colleague, a manager or a regulator.

Ethics

The values that guide a person's behaviour or judgement.

Practitioner

A health and care professional who is currently practising in their profession.

Refer

To ask someone else to provide care, treatment or other services which are beyond your scope of practice or, where relevant, because the service user has asked for a second opinion.

Scope of practice

The areas in which a registrant has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to practise safely and effectively.

Service user

Anyone who uses or is affected by the services of registrants, for example, patients or clients.

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