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Future of practitioner registration

On 29 January the Department of Health confirmed its intention to legislate for the statutory regulation of public health specialists who are not doctors or dentists by the Health and Care Professions Council.

The Government response to the earlier consultation stated that:

“The Government’s commitment is to introduce statutory regulation for public health specialists from a non-medical or dental background”

It also stated that:

“The Department believes that the HCPC is an experienced regulator and has a proven track record of taking on the regulation of new professional groups, most notably social workers in England in 2012. Given its history, the Department believes that the HCPC, working with key stakeholders, has an experience and capacity to be an effective regulator for public health specialists.

“Subject to the passage of the requisite legislation, we will give effect to this decision and ensure a safe transition of the register of relevant public health specialists from UKPHR to HCPC.”

It is intended that the transfer of public health specialists’ registration from UKPHR to HCPC will be effected on 01 July 2016.

After the transition, UKPHR will continue to hold and operate an accredited voluntary register¹ of public health practitioners. As the Government response states:

“Whilst UKPHR has ambitions to expand its practitioner registration scheme, **which the Department supports....**” (our emphasis).

It is hoped that in due course the bulk of the public health practitioner workforce which is currently completely unregulated will register with UKPHR, whose primary purpose is protection of the public from harm.

However, there are many additional values of practitioner registration:

¹ Professional Standards Authority accredits voluntary registers under a statutory scheme provided for in the Health & Social Care Act 2012

For policy-makers, a level of “right touch” regulation proportionate to the level of risk to the public their practice represents (in which respect UKPHR’s accreditation by the Professional Standards Authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 is relevant);

For registrants, achievement of a standard that assures themselves, their employers and the public of their competence to work in public health and a commitment to continue to keep skills and knowledge up to date and to develop further (for example, through UKPHR’s CPD requirement);

For public health employers and the public, quality assurance and a benchmark measure of competence for working in public health.

Over the next two years, UKPHR will need to make significant progress in attracting registration of public health practitioners in order to be satisfied that there is a sustainable future for the register after public health specialists’ registration has transferred to HCPC.

We will work to ensure that in all parts of the UK there will be access to registration for all public health practitioners with appropriate support available to those who wish to go through the registration process.

Public Health England will support UKPHR in order to ensure that this work is not affected by the transfer of public health specialists to HCPC during this period. This support will ensure that UKPHR will be strong enough to withstand the loss of income from specialist registration in 2016.

We are completely committed to a long-term, secure future for UKPHR as the holder and operator of a register of public health practitioners. As such, UKPHR commits to support the maintenance and development of the skills and knowledge of practitioner registrants after registration, for example through an appropriate scheme for continuing professional development (CPD).

We look forward to working with public health partners, public health practitioners and their employers and the public in order to contribute to the world class public health workforce that we need in order to deliver on the UK nations’ ambitions for improving the public’s health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities.



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