

Chair's Report – December 2024

1. Purpose of Report

To flag developments at the HCPC from the Chair's perspective and to update on activities of note.

2. Highlights

Sexual Safety

The HCPC's data on patterns in sexual misconduct across the professions it regulates was part of a package, including several interviews with victims and one with myself, run in a Sky News investigation trailed during a whole day and broadcast in prime time viewing.

The Sky News story was mentioned in Patient Safety Watch's newsletter, which was written by Jeremy (Lord) Hunt:

'Sexual harassment rife in ambulance service finds investigation

[An investigation by Sky News](#) has uncovered a culture of toxic behaviour among ambulance staff, including sexual harassment of colleagues and patients. The broadcaster revealed that paramedics account for 64 per cent of all investigations into sexual harassment against colleagues undertaken by the Health and Care Professions Council, despite making up just 11 per cent of its membership.

The issue obviously needs sorting out because as HCPC chair Christine Elliott said: "This is all about patient safety. Patients need to know when they see a practitioner, they can rely on them giving the best care possible with the best behaviour possible."

Additionally, the newsletter announces a new All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Patient Safety, for which Lord Hunt has been elected as chair. The secretariat for the group is Patient Safety Watch.

My thanks and congratulations to the Communications team led by Matt Peck, Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs, Insight and Analytics led by Gareth Davies, Head of Insight and Analytics, Professionalism and Upstream Regulation, led by Kellie Green, Head of Professionalism and Upstream Regulation, and the Policy and Standards team as well as external consultancy Luther Pendragon for its advice.

I encourage you to take a look and feel free to signpost materials or give your views on content.

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/sexual-safety/>

Annual reviews

Council members and I will have completed all due annual reviews by the time we convene for our final full meeting before the year end. I am pleased to reflect on a truly strong set of performances across the piece. The reviews have been done with integrity, insight and a commitment to the HCPC that shines through. There will be some interesting development opportunities as we move into next year.

Goodbyes to Council members, independent committee member Penny Joyce and Council Apprentices

We will all have an opportunity to say 'au revoir' to some key figures during the Council meeting but I want to put on record the huge debt of appreciation and warm gratitude we feel.

Sue Gallone will have served for eight years when she leaves the Council, preceding me. I can honestly say that it would have been difficult to do my job without having her calm authority and knowledge to draw on, especially during times of great stress and crisis. Sue chaired the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) for several years and evolved it to a much advanced state of development before moving on to the People and Resources Committee and Remuneration Committee, where she has brought focus on finance and deliverables and has prioritised effective working relationships.

Professor Steven Vaughan has brought new and exciting insights to the Council and a perspective that has never failed to enlighten and refresh our discussions. His lecture and seminar on integrity in professional bodies, adapted for health and care, featured strongly in Council members' highlights of this year's learning and development programme.

Dr. Penny Joyce, who retired as a Principal Lecturer at the University of Portsmouth in 2018, has been a much valued adviser and member of the Education and Training Committee for as long as it is possible to be! She has finally decided (to the Committee's and Helen Gough, its Chair's regret) that this is the moment to say farewell.

Geraldine Kinkead-Richards (an Occupational Therapist) and Jordan McKenna (an Operating Department Practitioner) are Council Apprentices and though they are not quite leaving yet, it seemed appropriate to give our other soon-departing members an opportunity to thank them for illuminating our discussions, supporting our committees and being ambassadors outside the HCPC. As well as active day jobs, both will become part of our alumni network, and we look forward to staying in touch, and we hope perhaps seeing them at our annual all-employee development day and on other occasions.

Thank you all for enriching our HCPC work and helping improve what we do for patient safety.

We have launched recruitment campaigns for up to four new Council members, and the Council Apprentices that will be our fifth cohort. It makes me proud to think what we have achieved by way of widening access and improving diversity, belonging and equity through this scheme. I wish we were 'allowed' to use these approaches more broadly in our searches.

Council effectiveness review

The Council took part in an introductory seminar related to our forthcoming Council effectiveness and development work. Yasir Samir, who together with Head of Governance, Karen Flaherty, will be leading this work for us, is planning to meet as many Council members and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) members as possible face to face in order to inform his thinking and tailor the interactions to suit the HCPC's needs.

Observed ARAC meeting

I was pleased to attend the ARAC meeting in an observer capacity and to see what a well run committee it is, with curious, well-prepared members, excellent collaboration and a good balance between support and challenge; wonderfully chaired by Lianne Patterson.

Chairs' quarterly meeting

The HCPC Committee Chairs, our Senior Council Member and I met for our regular review of cross-committee activity and discussion about wider subjects related to our work. These meetings have proved a valuable forum in which to examine data and observations in the round and give us early sight of emerging issues. There was much positive comment on the improvement we have seen in papers that come to the Committees and to the Council, as well as the way in which the executive team works with those bodies.

Chairs' roundtable - Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) presentation

Sir David Warren gave a comprehensive presentation on issues at the NMC identified by a whistleblower, covered in the media and resulting in a series of reviews, the recommendations of which the NMC is enacting. The meeting, convened by the Professional Standards Authority, was grateful to Sir David for his candid appraisal and reflection (on a Chatham House rule basis).

Innovation competition

Having been a champion of the scheme, I am thrilled to see the first session of the innovation competition come to fruition. It was an honour to chair the final judging panel. Sincere thanks to everyone who entered. I hope that the constructive critique and encouragement you received spur you on to success in a future round – and motivate other colleagues to participate.

Let's Talk with Chair session

My rolling programme of meetings continues, as does the supervision of my reverse mentor, Aditya Palai, who is ensuring that the programme stays on track. I learn so much that I use to inform my work for the Council and with the senior executive team, from the volunteers who tell me about their personal journeys and experiences of the HCPC. The key is they talk – and I listen.

Professor Steven Vaughan seminar

We had hoped to have a 'Christmas edition' of Professor Steven Vaughan's popular lecture and provocation on integrity in the health and care professions. However, we have compromised on the promise that Steven has kindly agreed to see if it can be arranged on one of his return visits to the UK next year.

Rollout of 'consent' principles

As reported last time, the group of five healthcare Chairs (HCPC plus the General Medical Council, NMC, General Pharmaceutical Council and General Optical Council) I convened has co-produced, with the Patient Safety Commissioner, the Patients Association and the Council of Deans of Health, and input from an NHS working group, a set of principles on the complex question of 'consent' in a healthcare setting. I am encouraged by the interest and warm response to these, and the opportunity of being involved in the group's work, from almost all the health and care regulators of registrant populations.

Most recently, as part of my engagement activity, I met the Patient Safety Commissioner who will encourage regulators' senior executives to 'get involved' in disseminating and including these 'consent' principles in their work on standards and education. I also spoke with the Chair of the General Osteopathic Council about consent, the new Patient Safety Principles (published by the Patient Safety Commissioner), as well as other regulatory topics.

Our first meeting of 2025 will focus on how best to ensure that patients are aware of the 'consent' principles and what they mean in practice. We will also consider the important implications of the Patient Safety Principles.

Social media posts

Here are recent posts of mine that attracted a good response and made useful connections for us:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/christine-elliott_patientsafety-governance-ai-activity-7264279743523434498-ncfz?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/christine-elliott_paramedics-ambulanceservice-sexualmisconduct-activity-7262810072236404737-x2ul?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/christine-elliott_paramedics-sexualsafety-sexualmisconduct-activity-7262754266950295552-39PZ?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/christine-elliott_applications-are-now-open-for-4-new-members-activity-7260679874686734336-bm5?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

3. Stakeholders and colleagues

During the period, I met colleagues and stakeholders including:

Professor Suzanne Rastrick OBE – Chief Allied Health Professions (AHP) Officer for England

Sir David Warren, Chair, NMC

Jo Clift, Chair, General Osteopathic Council

Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE, Patient Safety Commissioner

4. Fee increases for registrants

The parliamentary processes for the HCPC's proposed smaller incremental fee rise are proceeding smoothly to date. I continue to provide guidance and support to the executive team.