

Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Care Professions Council held in public as follows:

Date: Thursday 27 March 2025

Time: 11am

Venue: HCPC Offices, Kennington, London

Present: Christine Elliott (Chair)
Rebekah Eglinton
Alice Gair*
Helen Gough (by Microsoft Teams)
Helen Grantham
John McEvoy
Sejal Patel*
Lianne Patterson
Pameleta Ricketts
Catharine Seddon
David Stirling
Kathryn Thirlaway
Valerie Webster

Apologies: None

In attendance:

Zoe Allan, Business Manager, Chair and Chief Executive Office
Francesca Bramley, Governance Manager
Alastair Bridges, Executive Director of Resources
Nesta Caiger, Senior Insight and Intelligence Analyst
Laura Coffey, Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services
Francesca Coronin, Insight and Intelligence Analyst
Gareth Davies, Head of Insight and Analytics
Karen Flaherty, Head of Governance
Tony Glazier, Communications and Digital Lead
Aitor Hernandez Ortega, Senior Insight and Intelligence Analyst
Jamie Hunt, Head of Education
Alan Miah, Registration Advisor
Tom Miller, Policy Manager
Bernie O'Reilly, Chief Executive

* Council Apprentice

Matthew Peck, Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs
Anna Raftery, Head of Assurance and Compliance
Abdelmunem Said, Registration Advisor
Vikas Singh, Principal Insight and Intelligence Analyst
Jodie Sommerfeld, Head of Case Progression and Quality
Andrew Smith, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Education,
Registration and Regulatory Standards
Helen Tang, Registration Advisor
Laura Waterhouse, Associate, Capsticks LLP

Public meeting

1 Chair's welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting of Council, including a number of observers who were individually welcomed by the Chair.

1(a) Apologies for absence

1.1 There were no apologies.

1(b) Approval of agenda

1.2 The Council approved the agenda.

1(c) Declaration of members' interests in relation to agenda items

1.3 Council member Rebekah Eglinton declared an interest in the item relating to public inquiries (item 7) due to her work with a number of organisations and inquiries referenced in the summary report. No conflict was identified.

1(d) Minutes of the Council meeting on 30 January 2025

1.4 The Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of its meeting held in public on 30 January 2025.

1(e) Matters arising

1.5 The Council noted the updates on the matters arising from previous meetings held in public.

2 Chair's Report

2.1 The Council noted the Chair's report.

Performance reports

3 Chief Executive's Performance Report

3.1 The Chief Executive's performance report highlighted key areas of development in the reporting period since the Council's last meeting in January 2025.

3.2 The Council noted the report and the following points:

- the development of the HCPC budget, investment plan and corporate plan for 2025-26 and work under way to establish a framework for the HCPC's next corporate strategy;
- the laying of the parliamentary Order for the proposed fee rise in the UK and Scottish parliaments, with the fee rise expected to come into effect in April 2025 subject to parliamentary approval;
- the success of the continuing professional development (CPD) week from 3 to 7 March 2025 to highlight the importance of CPD and to share information about the HCPC's CPD requirements;
- ongoing communications and engagement to ensure protected titles and functions were clear and recognised, noting that an increasing proportion of fitness to practise (FTP) referrals relating to the misuse of protected titles related to social media, online resources and artificial intelligence;
- the Professional Body Forum on 4 March 2025, which had included information sharing on a range of topics including artificial intelligence (AI) and the HCPC data hub;
- the publication of the education annual report 2023-24 and a set of quality indicators for equality, diversity and inclusion in education; and
- the ongoing development of the HCPC online data hub to provide further self-service data to stakeholders, registrants and the public.

4 Finance Report

- 4.1 The Council noted the finance report outlining the HCPC's financial position for the period ended 28 February 2025.
- 4.2 The following areas were highlighted by the Executive Director of Resources:
 - a forecast surplus of £3.3 million for the full year, which was significantly higher than the previous forecast due to case review costs of £1.5 million that were now not expected to arise until 2025-26;
 - an increase of £3.3 million in the forecast income compared to the budget, driven mainly by an increase in international applications, noting that application numbers had spiked in January 2025;
 - an increase of £200,000 in the forecast expenditure compared to the budget, which was attributable to increased FTP legal costs, an increase in direct costs for international applications and temporary staff costs;
 - the reserves position continued to improve and was in line with the reserves policy, representing just over one month of operating expenditure; and

- the potential risks and opportunities relating to investment income and the decrease in international applications in February 2025 to below forecast levels which had continued into March.
- 4.3 The Council discussed the importance of the proposed fee rise to maintain the HCPC's financial sustainability in the absence of regulatory reform, particularly in view of the unpredictable volumes of international applications.
- 4.4 The Council thanked all those involved in the production of the Finance Report, noting its improved readability and usefulness.

5 Fitness to Practise Performance Report

- 5.1 The Council noted the update on the progress of the FTP improvement programme against the targets set to improve the quality and timeliness of case management.
- 5.2 The Council noted the following points.
- Performance against the three week target for progressing a matter to an interim order hearing once the need for an interim order had been identified had slightly exceeded the three week key performance indicator (KPI) target in January 2025 due to the postponement of two hearings during the Christmas period. In February 2025 the KPI had been met.
 - The twelve week target for progressing a matter to interim order hearing from receipt of a concern was not being met and the median time taken was 32 weeks due to a number of cases that had been subject to a third party investigation. Excluding these cases, the median time taken was 18 weeks due to two cases where information had been received late in the investigation that increased the risk profile.
 - Monitoring of the quality and timeliness of risk assessments continued and these had decreased to just below the 80% adherence target in February 2025, due to the onboarding of a new cohort of case managers in early 2025.
 - The 80% target for meeting the best practice standard for the quality and timeliness of case plans was met in January and February 2025, meaning the target had been achieved for eight of the previous nine months.
 - The median age of cases closed at the threshold and Investigating Committee Panel (ICP) stage in February 2025 was 26 weeks, which fell within the KPI of 33 weeks. The oldest case closed was 220 weeks and the youngest was two weeks, demonstrating the efforts to ensure the whole caseload progressed through the FTP process.

- The median age of cases concluded at a final hearing in February 2025 was 88 weeks. Although this exceeded the KPI target of 39 weeks, the low age of the youngest case concluded (27 weeks) reflected the positive impact of frontloading investigations in progressing cases to a final hearing more quickly.
- The number of cases at the post-ICP stage had continued to increase over the previous 18 months and in February 2025 the caseload was 478, of which 95 were listed for a future final hearing. Additional resource had been brought into the post-ICP team and the changes to the induction programme that had been introduced had received positive feedback.
- The median age of the open pre-ICP caseload was 42 weeks, which was higher than the KPI of 33 weeks. The median included cases that were or had been on hold due to third party investigations.
- The median age of cases at the post-ICP stage was 18 weeks, which was within the KPI target of 39 weeks. Approximately 110 cases were listed for a final hearing, which was the highest number in many months.
- The continued increase in FTP concerns received over the previous two years was also being experienced by other regulators. The increase appeared to correlate with increases in the number of registrants for each regulator and was monitored on a monthly basis.
- A second FTP investigations lawyer was due to join the HCPC in early April 2025 to enable more in-house frontloaded investigations. As at the end of February 2025 the Frontloading team were progressing 36 frontloaded investigations, three of which were ready for consideration by the ICP. Planning work was under way to expand the scope of the Frontloading team's work in 2025-26, including more complex investigations and preparation for final hearings.

- 5.3 Acknowledging the associated risks, the Council were supportive of an ambitious approach to developing the Frontloading team and welcomed further updates as the plans developed. An update on the plans and anticipated timescales to expand the scope of the FTP Frontloading team would be included in future FTP performance reports.
- 5.4 The Council discussed the continuing resourcing challenges within the FTP department. The difficulties in attracting candidates to case management roles, including new roles resulting from an increase to the establishment, were noted to be a challenge across all health care regulators. A number of case manager vacancies had resulted from employees being promoted and/or moving to other roles within the department, such as roles within the recently established Frontloading team. The HR team was engaged in exploring potential alternative markets aligned to the skills and capabilities required for case managers, operational managers and team managers.

- 5.5 The Council noted that whilst the number of open FTP cases had almost doubled over the previous year, the median age had remained static and considered the implications of this. The Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services clarified that the median case age had initially increased in line with the increasing volume of referrals and plateaued a few months later. The report had illustrated that the FTP team sought to progress both old and young cases.

Items for discussion/decision

6 Standing orders of the Education and Training Committee, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and People and Resources Committee

- 6.1 The Council noted the proposed changes to the standing orders of the Education and Training Committee (ETC), Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and People and Resources Committee (PRC). The proposed changes had resulted from a review of the standing orders by each committee in conjunction with a review of each committee's effectiveness.
- 6.2 The Council noted the following points:
- the standing orders of the ETC and the Education and Training Panels (ETPs) had been updated to clarify and streamline the information about the decision-making processes for the ETP;
 - recent and planned changes to the financial regulations and procurement policy and the government's managing public money guidance as they applied to the HCPC had been reflected in the standing orders for the ARAC; and
 - changes had been proposed to the standing orders of each of the ETC, ARAC and PRC to reflect the HCPC's style guidance for documents.
- 6.3 The Council approved the changes to the standing orders for each of the PRC, ETC and ARAC.

7 Public inquiries summary

- 7.1 The Council received a report from the Policy Manager providing an overview of the HCPC's activity relating to public inquiries and reviews since the last update provided to the Council in 2021.
- 7.2 Although the majority of public inquiries and reviews had not contained specific recommendations to the HCPC, any recommendations had been reviewed to identify learning themes and to support the HCPC's continued improvement and development work, noting some recommendations were addressed through existing workstreams rather than targeted actions.
- 7.3 The Council noted the report and the following additional activities that were outlined by the Policy Manager:

- a recent submission by the HCPC in response to the Lampard Inquiry into mental health inpatient deaths in Essex; and
- engagement with the Health Services Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB) during its investigation into electrocardiograms in ambulance services, noting the final report published on the day of the Council meeting included a recommendation for the HCPC and the College of Paramedics to work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders to improve consistency in the way paramedic students were educated about electrocardiograms, acknowledging that a range of professions other than paramedics, many of which were unregulated, delivered electrocardiograms.

7.4 The Council discussed the importance of communicating public inquiry recommendations and legislative changes such as the recently introduced mandatory reporting on child sexual abuse to registrants to raise awareness of the practical implications in an accessible way. Although the HCPC routinely engaged with education providers and the Professional Liaison and Upstream Regulation team also sought to share headlines with stakeholders, direct communication with registrants from the HCPC had not been considered to date. It was noted that professional bodies played a key role in disseminating this information. The Policy and Standards team would reflect on how the HCPC could work with professional bodies to directly communicate public inquiry recommendations and relevant legislative changes to registrants.

7.5 The Council welcomed the planned submission of a response to the Northern Ireland Executive's consultation on proposals to introduce a statutory duty of candour for individuals. The Council queried how developments such as the HCPC's recent introduction of Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardians were monitored to assess their effectiveness. The Policy Manager clarified that progress would be monitored every three months as the HCPC's FTSU Guardian role became more embedded. The FTSU Guardians were also required to report to the National Guardian Office (NGO) on a quarterly basis, in addition to reporting to the ARAC and providing regular updates to the Executive Leadership Team.

7.6 The Council noted the importance of the HCPC's ongoing review and response to public inquiry recommendations in fulfilling its duty to protect the public.

Action: The Executive would confirm the frequency of future updates on public inquiries to be submitted to the Council.

Items for noting

8 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held in public on 26 February 2025

- 8.1 The Council noted this item, including the new Committee members who had attended their first Remuneration Committee meeting.

9 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Education and Training Committee held in public on 5 March 2025

- 9.1 The Council noted this item, including the ETC's discussions on the approach to international assessment which was due to be considered by the Council during the private session of the meeting.

10 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held in public on 12 March 2025

- 10.1 The Council noted this item, including the new Committee members who had attended their first ARAC meeting and the assurance received regarding the financial year end audit and accounts.

11 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the People and Resources Committee held in public on 13 March 2025

- 11.1 The Council noted this item, including the progress that had been made within HR and a gap in the Committee's specialist technology expertise that had been identified in the review of the Committee's effectiveness.

12 Council forward plan 2025

- 12.1 The Council noted this item.

13 Council reflection

- 13.1 This item was considered after item 14 (data hub and latest products). Tony Glazier, Communications and Digital Lead, provided his reflections on 30 years of working with the HCPC. Tony reflected that through many organisational changes, he had continued to enjoy working with the HCPC. The HCPC's positive culture, effective leadership, ongoing commitment to individual development and, in particular, committed and talented colleagues within the Communications team and across the HCPC's functions had all contributed to Tony remaining with the HCPC over the years.
- 13.2 The Chair of the Council thanked Tony for his reflection, modesty and invaluable contributions to the HCPC over three decades.

- 13.3 The Chair of the Council acknowledged that Karen Flaherty, Head of Governance, would be leaving the HCPC imminently and extended her sincere thanks to Karen for her support and her contributions to the HCPC.

14 Data hub and latest product(s)

- 14.1 This item was considered before item 13 (Council reflection). The Senior Insight and Intelligence Analyst, the Principal Insight and Intelligence Analyst and the Head of Insight and Analytics presented an overview of the HCPC data hub, including profession profiles, profession retention and passlist matching. The insights from these workstreams would inform further work to identify areas of focus.
- 14.2 The profession profiles replaced the existing methods of reporting the number of registrants in each profession, providing visual aids to illustrate trends and a user-interactive dashboard in Microsoft Power BI, which was demonstrated to the Council. The professions profile dashboard provided reports on EDI characteristics and leavers and joiners for each profession, which could be used to inform workforce planning.
- 14.3 The Council observed a live demonstration of the professions' retention dashboard analysing the time spent on the register by profession/modality, age at first registration, gender/sex and place of training (UK or international). A refresh of the professions' retention analysis undertaken in 2023 was underway and an updated report was due to be published in May 2025.
- 14.4 A third dashboard to assess how effectively graduates from different courses, institutions or regions transitioned into the professional register was also demonstrated to the Council. This had been developed by mapping registration records for UK route registrants with a consolidated passlist dataset to monitor turnout rates.
- 14.5 The Communications team was planning the presentation and promotion of the data hub to stakeholders and members of the public, which was expected to launch in early summer 2025.
- 14.6 The Council welcomed the data hub developments as a significant step forward in the HCPC's insights and commended the Insight and Analytics team for the progress that had been made.

15 Resolution

- 15.1 The Council resolved that the remainder of the meeting would be held in private, because the matters being discussed related to the following:
- (a) information relating to a registrant, former registrant or application for registration;
 - (b) information relating to an employee or office holder, former employee or office holder or applicant for any post or office;
 - (c) the terms of, or expenditure under, a tender or contract for the purchase or supply of goods or services or the acquisition or disposal of property;

- (d) negotiations or consultation concerning labour relations between the Council and its employees;
- (e) any issue relating to legal proceedings which are being contemplated or instituted by or against the Council;
- (f) action being taken to prevent or detect crime or to prosecute offenders;
- (g) the source of information given to the Council in confidence; or
- (h) any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, is confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Council's functions.

Item	Reason for Exclusion
16	H
17	H
18	C and H
19	C and H
20	G and H
21	H
22	H
23	H
24	H
25	H
26	H

The meeting was adjourned at 1pm.

Chair:

Date: