Education and Training Committee
10 September 2020

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Education programme approval process new normal

Executive Summary

The paper in appendix 1 sets out:
- the Education Department's normal approach to on site working at education providers nationally;
- how we have continued to run our operations in light of restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- how we propose to move forward with a new way of working in the future.

To inform our proposals, we sought views from our stakeholders (visitors and education providers) who have attended virtual events. Feedback has been included through the paper at relevant points.

We also invited comments and discussions from the Senior Management Team (SMT) on the proposals, which we considered when developing the proposal.

Previous consideration	None.
Decision	The Committee is asked to discuss and agree how the Education Department will run the visit aspect of the approval process from the 2020-21 academic year.
Next steps	New ways of working to be communicated to stakeholders.
Strategic priority	The strategic priorities set in 2018 are no longer current. We are developing a new strategy that we aim to confirm at the end of 2020.
Risk	Strategic risk 1-3: • failure to deliver effective regulatory functions; • failure to anticipate and respond to changes in the external environment; and • failure to be a trusted regulator and meet stakeholder expectations. Risk appetite. The following sections are relevant to this paper:-

- Public protection - The Council takes a minimal approach to public protection risks. Public protection is our aim and our strategy and processes are intended to provide this.
- Compliance - The Council takes a minimal approach to compliance and regulatory risk. We will meet the law, regulations or standards in place to protect the public and employees and to protect data.
- Innovation - The Council seeks innovation that supports public protection, quality and efficiency. We balance embracing new technology and ideas with impact and financial investment and assess projects accordingly.

Financial and resource implications	An estimated 90% reduction in travel, accommodation and subsistence costs budgeted for the approval process.
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Appendix 1 - Proposals for approval process new normal

Normal approach	COVID approach
Normally 1.5 day on site visit: • Discussing areas of concerns privately as an HCPC panel • Deciding approach with other groups / stakeholders present • Meeting a range of stakeholders face to face to ask questions related to the proposal • Undertake a physical review of resources when deemed necessary, or suggested by the provider • Come to outcomes (including recommendations and outcomes) where possible • Feeding back outcomes where possible Costs: • Visitors paid day(s) fee • Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs for visitors (2-3) and executive (normally 1)	Normal onsite visit was not possible due to the HCPC moving to remote working: • Approval visit meetings held virtually via video or audio conferencing. • Removed requirement for meetings with service users and carers, and tour of physical resources (still able to explore 'resources' through other meetings) • All meetings, other than HCPC private meetings arranged by the provider • Still expected meetings to be chaired by the provider where there were multiple groups present. We considered that virtual meetings might have been less conducive to good discussions and having our concerns addressed. Therefore, to enable a smooth transition to this adjusted way of delivering a robust approval assessment we: • Held the HCPC private meeting approximately one week in advance of the visit date • Circulated areas of enquiry with the education provider as far in advance of meetings as possible to aid shared understanding of talking points • Allowed written statements prior to formulating the visitors' report, where groups were not met, or if visitors wanted further clarity • Flexed the agenda as needed over the allotted 2-3 days, if individuals are no longer available within agreed timeslots, and allowed shorter calls to be slotted into the agenda Where the approach in and of itself meant certain areas were not robustly explored, we reserved the right to caveat outcomes and recommendations by outlining further bespoke arrangements to be implemented instead of 'normal' monitoring (for example, a further site visit, an expanded AM submission to cover specific areas). Clear reasoning was required to justify why these requirements would be necessary. Costs: • Visitors paid day(s) fee

Proposed new normal

Broadly, continue with the COVID approach:

- Run virtual visit events as standard
- Only undertake meetings on site if visitors cannot receive assurances around areas of concern from undertaking those meetings virtually. This might be as a site visit to assess the response to conditions applied, which would need to be agreed by the Committee (as per the current arrangements). Any physical site visit would need to be assessed as adding value, when balanced against the cost associated
- Normally expect the education provider to arrange and 'host' virtual meetings
- HCPC private meeting held at least two weeks in advance of the visit, to formulate areas of enquiry prior to the visit
- Circulate areas of enquiry in advance of the meetings
- Continue to flex agenda (as is the current operational expectation), so groups only met if there is reason to do so
- Allow written statements prior to formulating the visitors' report, where required if groups not met, or if visitors want further clarity
- Option to caveat outcomes and recommendations by outlining further bespoke arrangements to be implemented instead of 'normal' monitoring, or some further arrangement through the approval process
- All other steps in the process would remain as they are currently, including pre-visit documentary submission, post visit reporting, and Executive support through the process

Costs:

- Visitors paid day(s) fee in line with current visit expectations (ie no change to current fee structure). No travel and accommodation costs (for visitors or executives) in most cases

Summary reasons for moving to the proposal:

- COVID approach shows that decisions able to be made to same level – and mitigations which allow for a site visit where absolutely necessary:
  - All visitors who responded agreed that "the HCPC panel was able to come to evidenced based conclusions linked to the education standards"
  - 4 out of 5 visitors agreed that "video conferencing allowed for the required level of discussion" and 85 per cent agreed that "groups in attendance were able to put across their views effectively"
  - Structured data shows that there is no increase in negative outcomes through the process
- Approach has been proven to work, and returning to the existing way of working might be seen as a step back, or applying additional burden for stakeholders:
  - More than half of visitors and two thirds of education providers noted that organisational aspects of a virtual visit were easier than a physical event

- 4 out of 5 education providers noted that there was less or about the same resource and financial implications for a virtual visit
- Significant cost saving – an estimated 90% reduction in travel, accommodation and subsistence costs. Using the 2020-21 financial year as an example, this would equal £22,659 (from a budget of £25,177)
- No risks or unresolvable issues identified by the executive team while planning or running virtual events

EDI impact

An equality and diversity impact (EDI) impact exercise has been undertaken, with no impact on any protected characteristic found. The following considerations were made when undertaking this exercise:

- Site visits will no longer be standard but might be required in specific circumstances. The impact on any visitor or member of the executive team with a disability will be reduced
- Reviewing documentation remotely will continue to be required, but virtual events (via video conference) will become more frequent. This could impact visitors with issues with their sight. We moved to electronic only submissions last academic year, and no adjustments from the current pool of visitors have been requested in relation to this.

Steps required to implement

- Agreement from the Education and Training Committee (ETC)
- Minor updates to the website, template comms, and internal and external guidance
- Learning resources for executives and partners, to provide clarity on expectations and techniques to ensure the success of events
- Updates required to existing systems workaround for the approval process, with a view to have system changes made in the longer term (when a development cycle permits), if required