

Director's address – AGM - 2009

It has been another interesting year here – we have concentrated on improvements on a number of fronts

Mark Twain said, never put off until tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow – we have been prioritising here as well

Legislation – we continue to seek legislation to modernise and improve our fitness to practice function, in particular amendments to allow a pool of ftp committee members, changes to the power of the chair and the introduction of new sanctions, similar to those enjoyed by other healthcare regulators. The department has advised that it cannot deliver all that we require through their chosen method of reform and we look forward to early confirmation that they have commenced work on a secondary process.

As the President said we have so far unsuccessfully sought a non-practicing register – the rationale given by the Confidence in Care Board for not bringing this forward is around the possible confusion caused by it and the fact that the GPhC in GB isn't having one. We have confirmed that the GCC has a non practicing register and other regulators, including the GMC will have a de-facto non-practicing register when revalidation is introduced – they will have a single register which will contain practicing (licensed) and non-practicing (unlicensed) doctors.

Its not all bad news though, we are progressing with reforms to Council, its composition and appointment method and the introduction of compulsory CPD. We look forward to implementation of the legislation as it is approved.

Internal processes – We have introduced improvements internally to FTP, including a Scrutiny Committee which advises the registrar on advancement of cases to hearing, regular training and reviews of FTP committees, and the introduction of a new Code of conduct and supporting documents.

Having introduced more user friendly retention forms last year we are now investigating on-line retention processes and associated improvements to methods of payment following feedback from last years fees consultation. We are constantly striving to improve efficiency and have reduced printing, postage and other house costs year on year for the last two years.

External Relationships – we continue to be actively involved with other UK and NI healthcare Regulators as well as our counterparts, the PSI in the Republic. Representatives from these groups have attended our FTP training events and participated in our consultations and we have both presented and attended CHRE best practice events. The opportunity to learn from others and demonstrate our strengths is invaluable to us as a learning organisation.

A number of London based regulators have already indicated that they plan future use of our facilities for FTP hearings in NI – the recent building improvements including access, facilities, communication and recording equipment and our close working relationship have all contributed to this significant step for the public and registrants in NI, allowing them to attend local hearings at minimal expense.

We have further developed or MOU with PSI and this year will see each regulator providing observer status to the other on key governance committees.

With the DHSSPS inspectorate and the new HSCB we have developed an MOU which will ensure the effective handling of all complaints and concerns, avoiding duplication and ensuring all complaints are effectively managed.

Professional Forum

We have been very pleased with the engagement with the members on the issue of the proposed Professional Forum. The Helm report and fees consultation 2009/2010 endorsed the NI approach and supported the creation of such a Forum, the corresponding Public Forum has already proved its worth across arrange of issues.

Council will consider at their meeting later this week the results of the consultation, which showed overwhelming support for the approach to the Forum. I am sure that we will have much more to say on the work and success of this body at next years AGM

Future Plans

The legislative reform will bring with it significant work in the creation of new supporting governance structures, recruitment and induction for Council and FTP committee members and the supporting regulations and processes for the introduction of compulsory CPD

We will continue to explore methods of minimising cost, using technology and modern practices to get maximum value from our resources, in so doing we will reduce the burden on members by minimising fee increases and returning better value from the fees collected.

Our benevolent fund will shortly be re-launched and will support eligible people through provision of and signposting to advice, assistance with financial and debt management and direct financial intervention where appropriate.

It is important that the engagement we enjoy with the public is reciprocated by members and that you play a part in the work that we do – there are many ways of helping, at the most basic responding to consultations, attending meetings like this one all the way to offering to assist on committees or Council.

In the future there will be opportunities to work with the Professional Forum, advising the regulator and working with a range of professionals to develop the profession in the public interest.

I started with Mark Twain and will leave the last words to him – Always do right, this will gratify some people and astonish the rest

I now invite Jacqui Dougan, the Honorary Treasurer to address the meeting