

Council

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

Date: Thursday 16 October 2025

Time: 1.30pm

Venue: Videoconference (Zoom)

Present: Christine Elliott (Chair)

Alice Gair*
Rebekah Eglinton
Helen Grantham
John McEvoy
Lianne Patterson
Pameleta Ricketts
Catharine Seddon
Carl Stychin
Kathryn Thirlaway
Valerie Webster

Apologies: Helen Gough
Sejal Patel*
David Stirling

In attendance:

Zoe Allan, Business Manager, Chair and Chief Executive's Office (until item 6)
Claire Amor, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs
Francesca Bramley, Governance Manager
Alastair Bridges, Executive Director of Resources
Laura Coffey, Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services
Dorota Ferguson, public observer (until item 6)
Rachael Gledhill, Head of Policy and Standards
Colette Higham, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Professional Standards Authority
Jamie Hunt, Head of Education
Eve Johnson, Hearings Officer and Employee Forum Representative
Alan Keshtmand, Head of Finance and Commercial
Rebecca Kidson, Senior Policy Officer
Noah Linley-Adams, Governance Officer
K-arlie Livermore, Policy Officer

James McMahon, Head of Estates, Facilities Management and Environmental Sustainability (from item 6)
Patricia Morrissey, Head of Governance
Dave Munday, Lead Professional Officer, Unite
Bernie O'Reilly, Chief Executive and Registrar
Corrado Palmas, Case Support Officer, Fitness to Practise (from item 4)
Matthew Peck, Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs
James Penry-Davey, Capsticks LLP Partner
Scarlet Quilloy, Quality Assurance Officer
Andrew Smith, Executive Director of Education, Registration and Regulatory Standards and Deputy Chief Executive
Helen White, Independent Education and Training Committee member

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 Apologies for absence were received from Helen Gough, Sejal Patel, and David Stirling.
- 1.2 The meeting was declared quorate.

1(b) Approval of agenda

- 1.3 The Council approved the agenda.

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

- 1.4 There were no interests to declare from Council members related to specific agenda items.

1(d) Minutes of the Council meeting on 17 July 2025

- 1.5 The Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of its meeting held in public on 17 July 2025.

1(e) Matters arising

- 1.6 The Council noted the updates on the matters arising from previous meetings held in public. All actions were proposed as closed.

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 organisational performance and key developments in the reporting period since the Council's last meeting in July 2025.
- 3.2 The Council noted the report and the following points.
- The HCPC all-employee development day was scheduled to take place on 7 November 2025. A Fitness to Practise development day had also taken place in September 2025 to reflect on achievements and to share perspectives on the challenges within the Fitness to Practise (FTP) department.
 - Artificial intelligence (AI) deployment continued at pace across the HCPC. Recent development included the automation of invoice processing to improve the accuracy and speed of processing and the implementation of an AI redaction tool within the FTP department following a comprehensive proof of concept trial to support case file preparation.
 - The Professional Body Forum meeting on 17 September 2025 professional bodies had focused on the development of the corporate strategy. Key feedback themes included the diversity of the professions regulated by the HCPC, an appetite for guidance on topics such as remote consultation, community working and AI.
 - Good progress had been made on the delivery of the corporate plan 2025-26 milestones, including the approval of several commercial technology partnerships to support the delivery of the technology roadmap. A second recruitment campaign had been launched for the vacant Head of Professionalism and Upstream Regulation role.
 - International registration performance had significantly improved since June 2025 as a result of additional resource the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) had approved to manage the increased demand following a spike in international applications in January 2025. As international applications had subsequently reduced, the ELT planned to review resourcing requirements and scale down as required.
 - The Registration Performance Report submitted to the Education and Training Committee included a different KPI based on an average (median) timeframe, which was considered to provide a more meaningful reflection of overall performance. The Council agreed that future Chief Executive Performance Reports would align with the international registration KPI currently reported to the Education and Training Committee. This would also promote consistency across Council and ETC performance reports.

Action: Future Chief Executive Performance Reports would replace the current international registration KPI with the median international registration KPI, to promote consistency across the Council and the Education and Training Committee.

- The risk rating for strategic risk 2 had increased from 3 to 6 due to a number of vacancies. Although the score for strategic risk 6 remained stable, the NHS hospital manager barring scheme had been noted as a risk influencer. A full review of the strategic risk register would be undertaken at the end of the financial year in line with the finalisation of the new corporate strategy.
- A new multi-factor authentication (MFA) process had been successfully launched in September 2025 in response to a cyber attack. The implementation had been carefully timed to minimise any disruption to registration renewals. Discussions were ongoing with Microsoft to seek to recoup some of the excess charges generated by the fraudulent activity.

3.3 The Chief Executive provided an update on the following matters that had arisen after the finalisation of the Chief Executive's Performance report.

- The Professional Standards Authority (PSA) had written to the Chief Executive to share a statement made by the PSA regarding hate crime and hate speech in view of the 6% increase in race-related hate crime over the previous three years, alongside recent global and national events. A response had been provided to the PSA to outline the HCPC's standards, guidance and practice notes that provided a robust framework to challenge all forms of hate crime and hate speech to be challenged. The proposed changes to the standards of education and training (SETs) sought to further embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into practise.
- A second letter received from the PSA had related to recent media coverage of doctors who had been banned from practice abroad and had subsequently worked in the NHS, emphasising the importance of robust registration processes. Again, a response had been provided to the PSA setting out how the HCPC managed these risks, which included ID verification checks, communication with employers and reciprocal arrangements with other regulators for dual registration. The PSA had been asked to share best practice across health care regulators to further improve the HCPC's approach.
- As part of the NHS 10 year plan proposal to modernise revalidation systems. the government had asked health care regulators to review revalidation processes to remove bureaucracy while ensuring proportionality and effectiveness. A plan setting out what the HCPC could achieve within both current and future legislative frameworks was on track to be submitted by 14 November 2025, with work expected to commence in April 2026.

- 3.4 The Council reflected on recent global and national events and considered whether the HCPC's communications were sufficiently visible. The Chief Executive outlined the continuing efforts to build relations with the 'silent majority' of registrants and the wider health care sector. The Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs emphasised that there were opportunities to build the HCPC's profile. The new corporate strategy would provide a solid foundation for this, however the approach would be carefully considered to avoid regulatory overreach.

4 Fitness to Practise Performance Report

- 4.1 The Council noted the update on the progress of the Fitness to Practise (FTP) improvement programme against the targets set to improve the quality and timeliness of case management.

- 4.2 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 was four weeks in August 2025, which was slightly above the three week key performance indicator.
- 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 19 weeks, which was primarily due to a number of cases that had been subject to a third party investigation. Excluding these cases, the median time taken was 16 weeks. There were two cases for which the risk level had changed at an advanced stage of the investigation. In response to a question regarding the protection of public safety in cases where new information was received, the Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services clarified that the HCPC still aimed to impose an interim order within three weeks and this was often actioned more quickly, noting registrants required a minimum of seven days' notice. Employers could also potentially suspend registrants to maintain public protection while investigations progressed.
- Monitoring of the quality and timeliness of risk assessments continued and in August 2025 the 80% adherence target had been exceeded, with 89% compliance reported.
- The 80% target for meeting the best practice standard for the quality and timeliness of case plans had also been exceeded in August 2025, with 86% compliance reported. This target had been consistently met since January 2025, when a new induction programme had been introduced to establish good investigation skills for all new starters.
- As had been reported to the Council in July 2025, a data anomaly had resulted in the number of new concerns received during quarter 1 2025-26 being underreported. The actual number of new concerns

received during quarter 1 2025-26 was 676, which was approximately 20% higher than originally reported. This represented an average of 225 new concerns per month. The data anomaly had been corrected and the Quality Assurance team had confirmed that no other datasets had been affected. In order to manage the increased volumes of concerns, a review of capacity across teams was under way to utilise FTP resource flexibly. Other solutions included the recently launched AI redaction tool.

- The number of cases at the post-ICP stage had remained broadly consistent. At the end of August 2025 there were 513 cases, 86 of which were listed for a final hearing.
- The median age of cases closed at the pre-ICP stage was 26 weeks, which was within the KPI threshold of 33 weeks and had remained relatively stable since May 2024.
- The median age of cases at the final hearing stage was 104 weeks, which meant the KPI target of 39 weeks had not been met. This was due to a number of the oldest cases concluding at a final hearing in August 2025.
- In July 2025 the final phase of changes to the FTP operating model went live, with the streaming of non-frontloaded, standard investigations to create a more efficient pre-Investigating Committee Panel (ICP) process.
- There was a continued focus on embedding in-house frontloading across the FTP department. The first three in-house frontloaded investigations had reached the final hearing stage in October 2025. This was a significant milestone and learning would be taken forward as the HCPC's frontloading capabilities continued to develop.

5 Finance Report

5.1 The Council noted the finance report outlining the HCPC's financial performance year to date to August 2025.

5.2 The Head of Finance and Commercial outlined the following points.

- The budget and forecast had been updated since the previous finance report submitted to the Council in July. This reflected the reduction in international applications, the timing of payroll costs and legal fees and the fee increase that came into effect from 29 April 2025.
- The August 2025 year-to-date forecast was a moderate surplus of £318k, which was in line with the forecast surplus of £321k when excluding exceptional legal costs funded from reserves. The full year forecast was a breakeven position of £12k, which was lower than the budgeted surplus of £180k.

- The investments portfolio forecast had reduced to £1.8m expenditure against a budget of £2.3m. This reduction was mainly due to the deferral of the international assessment programme. Of this £1.8m, £0.6m had been committed.
- The renewal cost for Microsoft enterprise subscription had increased by £60k. There was no scope for the HCPC to negotiate with Microsoft, there were plans to initiate a procurement process to ensure good value for money and there were plans to engage a specialist partner to support this process. Discussions were ongoing to seek to recoup the excess costs arising from the recent SMS cyber attack alongside the HCPC's insurance cover.

- 5.3 The Council noted that the report showed no investment expenditure was projected for FTP in 2025-26 and expressed concern regarding this. It was clarified that this related only to systems-based projects to support FTP case streaming that had been delivered and that further work was ongoing to invest in the FTP department, including support for the in-house legal teams, technological expertise and targeted interventions to improve timeliness.
- 5.4 The Council discussed the shortfall in employee full time equivalents (FTE), noting that 375 FTE had been reported against a forecast of 398. The Head of Finance and Commercial clarified that the shortfall related to vacancies that had not been filled or where an appointment had been made but there was a gap between the outgoing and incoming postholder. The Council noted that the HCPC's financial position was constrained and that if the vacancy underspend was excluded, the position would be more challenging.
- 5.5 The financial regulations had been updated to provide greater clarity on the threshold for which Council approval was required and to align the financial commitments and approval thresholds to the revised procurement policy, in line with the Procurement Act (2023) that had come into effect from February 2025. The revised financial regulations had been recommended to the Council by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and the People and Resources Committee (PRC) in September 2025.
- 5.6 The Council approved the updated financial regulations
- 5.7 The Head of Governance noted that the financial regulations formed part of the HCPC code of corporate governance, which would be updated to incorporate the updated regulations.
- 5.8 The reserves policy had been reviewed by the ARAC and the PRC in September 2025 with no material changes proposed. The ARAC had provided some feedback for incorporation into the next review and had also requested that the Executive aim to complete the next review of the policy earlier than the scheduled annual review. The timeline would be considered by the Executive and the Chair of the ARAC, taking into account the next fees review, wider financial pressures, opportunities and challenges.
- 5.9 The Council approved the reserves policy.

Items for discussion/decision

6 Consultation on revisions to the standards of education and training

- 6.1 The Policy Manager summarised the proposed changes to the standards of education and training (SETs) to ensure the standards remained outcome-focused and fit for purpose across a changing education and health and care landscape. The Education and Training Committee had recommended the proposals to the Council for approval at its meeting in September 2025.
- 6.2 The proposals had been developed through extensive engagement with stakeholders, expert panels and internal research.
- 6.3 The proposed changes related to:
- the structure of the SETs;
 - how the SETs specified the academic level of qualification required for entry to the Register;
 - different delivery models;
 - futureproofing the SETs, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving technology such as artificial intelligence; and
 - strengthening and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).
- 6.4 Subject to the Council's approval, the proposed consultation on the revised SETs would run for 13 weeks from 4 November 2025 to 2 February 2026. The proposed consultation document and consultation questions were appended to the Council paper. Subject to approval, a 12 month period was planned for implementation. Following the consultation, the revised SETs would be submitted to the Council for approval.
- 6.5 The Communications team had been engaged to support the development of a targeted communications plan.
- 6.6 The Council noted that environmental sustainability had not been included as part of the SETs review. Prior to the SETs review commencing, sustainability information had been published on the HCPC website alongside the launch of a sustainable practice hub. At institution level, higher education institutions were already subject to a number of legal requirements, including compliance with net zero targets. It was considered outside of the HCPC's remit to set environmental sustainability standards at institution level. In view of this and in line with other health care regulators, the HCPC had therefore not proposed specific environmental sustainability standards within the SETs and this approach had been supported by the Education and Training Committee. The Council endorsed this approach.
- 6.7 The Council welcomed the increased focus on outcomes and the embedding of EDI throughout the standards.
- 6.8 The Council was supportive of the intention to future proof the SETs, however a Council member queried whether an additional outcome should be added to require registrants to reflect on the impact of technology on their role and the

balance of activities within their role, with a focus on patient safety and patient experience. The Head of Education explained that aim of the SETs was to ensure learners met the HCPC's requirements and that this may be more appropriately addressed within the standards of proficiency and/or the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs).

Action: Further consideration would be given to determine how best to address the need for professionals to reflect on the impact of technology on their role and whether this should sit within the SETs, the standards of proficiency and/or the SCPEs.

6.9 The Council approved the proposed consultation on the revised SETs, subject to consideration of the following points:

- whether SETs 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9 should refer to 'current professional practice' rather than 'professional practice';
- whether the wording of SET 9.4 was sufficient to prepare future registrants for careers which may require them to cross professional boundaries, in view of how allied health professional roles may evolve in the future as envisaged in the NHS 10 Year Plan; and
- whether a final free text question should be added to the consultation to invite respondents to identify any additional essential requirements that were not addressed within the SETs.

Action: The Council's feedback would be taken into consideration prior to the publication of the SETs consultation.

7 Update on environmental sustainability statement commitments and actions

7.1 The Head of Estates, Facilities Management and Sustainability presented a progress update on the delivery of the HCPC's sustainability strategy approved by the Council in 2023.

7.2 The following points were noted:

- the development of online resources for registrants to increase awareness and support environmentally sustainable practice;
- the completion of the HCPC estates consolidation in 2023 resulting in a 50% reduction in the estate compared to the baseline;
- plans to introduce more timely and consistent reporting through a proof of concept for a new Microsoft sustainability reporting module;
- the planned actions to support achievement the target to achieve net zero Scope 1 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2027-28, including implementation of the staged phase-out of gas, and site-wide plan to

upgrade relevant portions of heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment to facilitate this;

- the achievement of the Scope 2 GHG emissions net zero target in 2023-24 and in the move to renewable energy supplies in 2024-25 (pending external verification of the 2024-25 data), noting an application had been made to continue the HCPC's access to renewable energy in 2026-27;
- the target to achieve net zero Scope 3 GHG emissions (relating mainly to purchased goods and services) by 2039-40, noting this accounted for the largest proportion of the HCPC's emissions;
- the updated procurement policy approved by the Council in July 2025, which referenced sustainable procurement, minimising environmental impact and the promotion of ethical sourcing in line with national policy; and
- a summary of the risks and opportunities associated with the delivery of the sustainability strategy, as requested by the People and Resources Committee at its meeting in September 2025.

7.3 The Council noted the continued progress towards the HCPC's agreed targets.

7.4 In response to a question, it was clarified that the HCPC's audited accounts were used to report the HCPC's greenhouse gas emissions and the data was verified by an external consultancy. The emissions were categorised according to greenhouse gas emission reporting standards.

7.5 The Council enquired as to whether financial provision had been made for the transition period of the staged phase out of gas. The Executive Director of Resources confirmed that this had been incorporated into the investment programme and that this would be kept under review as this would be a multi-year programme.

7.6 The Council discussed the potential impact of increasing use of AI on the HCPC's carbon footprint. Reflecting on the HCPC's aspirations to embrace AI to drive efficiency, the Council queried how these emissions would be measured and whether the timeline to achieve net zero Scope 3 emissions should be brought forward, as AI emissions were understood to be predominantly categorised as Scope 3 emissions. The Head of Estates, Facilities Management and Sustainability advised that further work was required to build a more complete understanding of the Scope 3 emissions and therefore bringing the timeline forward was not advisable. In addition, there was no information on a standard metric or quantifiable framework for measuring AI emissions specifically. It was noted that emissions would vary according to the AI supplier, with some suppliers investing in greener data hubs.

Items for noting

8 Decisions outside of meetings

- 8.1 The Council had approved the recruitment campaign for two new Council Apprentices who would join the HCPC in January 2026 and the campaign was due to launch imminently. The Council had agreed to increase the term of office from 12 months to 15 months. The Council expressed thanks to Alice Gair and Sejal Patel, Council Apprentices, for their support in preparing videos to promote the scheme and to Alice Gair for testing the online portal that would be used to manage applications for the first time.
- 8.2 The results of a survey seeking feedback on the Council Apprentice alumni network had been shared with Council members. Opportunities to develop the alumni network would be explored at the next network meeting on 21 November and the Council would be kept informed, particularly for proposals with cost implications.
- 8.3 The Chair of the Council acknowledged that October 2025 was Black History Month and commended a recent blog published by Council member Pameleta Ricketts and her colleague Leona Blake. The article had amplified the narrative on diversity and representation in health care and highlighted the importance of building collective strength through sharing successes. This also linked to the reflections that had been provided by Dabbi Taylor, Education and Training Committee Student Representative, on the importance of psychological safety at the previous Council meeting in July 2025. Rebekah Eglinton, Council member and Sejal Patel, Council Apprentice, were preparing articles to reflect on Black History Month and the Chair encouraged all members to build on this work and celebrate successes, both individually and collectively.
- 8.4 Pameleta Ricketts, Council member, reflected on her experience of the Council Apprentice scheme, which had given her the opportunity to develop and learn and had evolved and improved over time to allow many others to grow and thrive. She had experienced barriers and setbacks, and reflected that 'you can be what you can see'.

9 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Education and Training Committee held in public on 10 September 2025

- 9.1 The Council noted this item.

10 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held in public on 18 September 2025

- 10.1 The Council noted this item. A satisfactory conclusion had been reached with the National Audit Office (NAO) on the year-end audit and the Annual Report and Accounts had been approved by the Council. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee expressed her thanks to all those who had contributed.

11 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the People and Resources Committee held in public on 19 September 2025

- 11.1 The Council noted this item. The Committee had been pleased to welcome an Employee Forum representative to the meeting.

12 Council forward plan

- 12.1 The Council noted the forward plan which was provided at each meeting to ensure visibility of Council business and was updated as required when new items were agreed.
- 12.2 A forward plan for 2026 would be submitted to the Council at its next meeting on 4 December 2025.

13 Council reflection

- 13.1 Eve Johnson, Hearings Officer and Employee Forum representative, provided her reflections. The Chair had set a warm, positive and encouraging tone to the meeting. The focus on accessibility had been appreciated, including clarification of acronyms throughout the meeting and the consideration of accessibility within the SETs review. Communication had been strong and there had been a good level of interaction with questions welcomed. The HCPC had taken a proactive and collaborative approach to integrating AI into workflows, checking for bias and inaccuracy; ethics, education, environmental considerations and empathy would all be important considerations as the use of AI continued to develop. The People and Resources Committee had discussed the impact of international events on employees at its meeting in November 2025 and as an Employee Forum representative and it had been reassuring to hear of the wide range of support that the HCPC had put in place. Protected characteristics had been proactively celebrated during the meeting. Improving equity and accessibility in relation to neurodiversity could be an area for future consideration to support those who were differently abled, both within meetings and within the meeting papers.

14 Resolution

- 14.1 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
15	H
16	H
17	H
18	H
19	H
20	H
21	H
22	H
23	H
24	H
25	H

The meeting was adjourned at 3.35pm.

Chair:

Date: