From the Chief Executive

professional standards authority

BY E-MAIL:

NHS England
PO Box 16738
Redditch
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15 November 2013

Dear Sir

Improving general practice – a call to action (NHS England)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We have provided a general response rather than answered your questions directly and hope you will find this information helpful.

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care[1] promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and voluntary registration of people working in health and care. We are an independent body, accountable to the UK Parliament. More information about our work and the approach we take is available at www.professionalstandards.org.uk.

Earlier this year we assumed a new function under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to set standards for voluntary registers of practitioners who work in a variety of health and care occupations. More information about the scheme and the accredited registers is available on our website and we would of course be happy to provide additional information if required.

The Accredited Voluntary Registers scheme supports choice, promotes quality, enhances confidence and strengthens protection for patients and service users, employers and commissioners. We would encourage you to consider this scheme in the context of your consultation questions 10 and 11.

Rather than extend statutory regulation to more professions, the government decided that it preferred us to develop a new system of assured voluntary registration. Through that we set standards for organisations that hold voluntary registers and we accredit those that

[1] The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care was previously known as the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence

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meet them. The organisation and its registrants are then entitled to use a registered quality mark which enables the public, employers and commissioners to recognise them easily. Our standards for organisations include education and training. Accredited Voluntary Registers set standards for their registrants covering personal behaviour, technical competence and where relevant, business practice.

We have accredited seven registers this year so far and by the end of this financial year may have accredited 17 covering approximately 70 occupations. We have accredited registers of counsellors, psychotherapists, foot health practitioners, acupuncturists, complementary therapists – many of whom work with cancer centres and hospices and play therapists. The United Kingdom Public Health Register has applied for accreditation and is currently being considered. The Academy for Healthcare Science plans to apply for accreditation in 2014 and is likely to cover 50 occupations.

This is a new scheme and we are gradually building awareness of it. Information is available on the NHS Choices website; NHS Employers includes information about the scheme and recently accredited organisations in its bulletins for employers. The scheme is also recognised by the Any Qualified Provider scheme and commissioners can choose to contract with registrants who are on an accredited register.

We would be pleased to assist you to support integration pioneers in testing new ways of commissioning and contracting for integrated primary care and community services for physical and mental conditions, building in the AVR scheme to support choice and provide assurance as to quality.

We would be happy to discuss this further.

Yours faithfully,

Harry Cayton
Chief Executive