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Chair: Dr Anna van der Gaag
Chief Executive and Registrar: Marc Seale

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8 June 2011

Dear Mr Methven

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the regulation of the clinical technologist profession.

As you will be aware, in 2007, the previous administration published the White Paper 'Trust, Assurance and Safety: The Regulation of Health Professions in the 21st Century' which clearly set out that Government's policy to regulate healthcare scientists, including those groups recommended for regulation by the HPC. As you know, this was delayed because of the ongoing modernising scientific careers project. Although the HPC has powers to recommend a group for regulation, the decision about whether regulation is introduced is one for government and for parliament.

In February 2011, shortly after the publication of the Health and Social Care Bill 2011, the new coalition government published the Command Paper: 'Enabling excellence' which sets out the present Government's policy with regards to extending regulation to other groups. In summary, the key points are as follows.

The Government does not believe that statutory regulation is always the most appropriate or proportionate approach. Instead, the Command Paper outlines a system of 'assured voluntary registration'.

The Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) is to be renamed and given powers to 'accredit' or quality assure registers held by professional bodies and other organisations. The HPC (also to be renamed) would have powers to establish voluntary registers itself, subject to carrying out an impact assessment and consultation.

With specific reference to the healthcare science workforce, the Command Paper says the following.

'For the overwhelming majority of occupational and professional groups which are not currently subject to statutory regulation and which are generally not considered to present a high level of risk to the public, but where recommendations that regulation should be introduced have been made (including those groups recommended by the HPC for statutory regulation in the past, but not yet registered), the assumption will be that assured voluntary registration would be the preferred option.

The extension of statutory regulation to currently unregulated professional or occupational groups, such as some groups in the healthcare science workforce, will only be considered where there is a compelling case on the basis of a public safety risk and where assured voluntary registers are not considered sufficient to manage the risk.' (Paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12, page 18.)

I hope the above provides some clarity as to the Government's present position on extending statutory regulation to currently unregulated groups. With regards to voluntary registration, we are in the relatively early stages of considering how and in what circumstances we might consider exercising our future discretionary powers to establish voluntary registers. (It is important to note that the Health and Social Care Bill 2011 is before parliament and therefore the HPC does not have any current powers in this regard. We currently anticipate that the provisions in the Bill will not come into force until July 2012 at the earliest.)

We intend to agree the policy and process in this area over the course of this year before beginning to consider which groups might be suitable for voluntary registration. An impact assessment and consultation would then be required before reaching a final decision in respect of a specific group. As such, we have not yet made any decisions about whether the HPC should establish a voluntary register for any specific professional or occupational group.

Thank you for your anecdotal feedback about information that individuals appear to have received from us. My apologies should we have given any incorrect information. To confirm, you are correct that 'clinical scientist' is a protected title, however the use of the term 'clinical' is not protected.

Please do let us know if we can be of further assistance at this time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Seale". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Marc Seale
Chief Executive and Registrar