

17 May 2007

Dear colleague,

Regulation of Healthcare Scientists

On 21 February 2007, the Government published the White Paper “Trust, Assurance and Safety – The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century”. This document sets out plans for the future direction of regulation of healthcare professionals and includes information on the Government’s approach to the extension of regulation beyond those professions that are already regulated. The White Paper sets out a significant programme of work to implement the proposals, including the intention to introduce primary and secondary legislation. The precise implementation plan will be finalised following an inclusive stakeholder conference on June 5 but it is clear that the timings for the regulation of healthcare scientists (HCS) will now need to take account of the overall implementation timetable.

In addition, the Department has initiated work to ensure that education and training at both pre and post registration levels are linked to a career structure in a model of provision that is both affordable and sustainable.

The Department of Health met recently with members of the aspirant HCS groups to discuss the effect on the regulation of the following professionals:

Clinical technologists
Clinical perfusion scientists
Clinical physiologists
Clinical photographers
Maxillofacial prosthetic technologists.

Healthcare scientists remain a priority for the introduction of statutory regulation. However, for the reasons set out above, this is now not likely to take place before 2009. In the meantime, it is important that the infrastructure supporting registration arrangements remains in place and that practitioners continue to be held on voluntary registers in the interests of public protection.

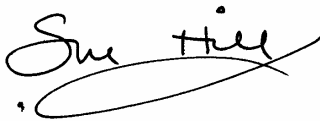
Whilst this may seem disappointing in terms of the timescales, there is much to be done in preparation. As well as undertaking the modernisation of healthcare scientist pre-registration education and training, the following steps need to be undertaken to accommodate the opening of a statutory register:

- Publication of a draft Section 60 Order and public consultation document – 3 months
- Report on consultation – 2 months
- Amended Section 60 Order goes through Scottish and English Parliaments – 1 month
- Royal Assent – 1 month
- HPC administration and move of registers – 2 months
- Opening of new part of the register.


It is important to note that these timings are not all fixed and there are a number of factors that may have an impact on timescales, including the availability of Departmental lawyers and Parliamentary time.

It is our intention, in due course, to send a statement explaining the situation to the NHS, so that Strategic Health Authorities and provider organisations are aware of the change in timescales. We will also highlight the importance of staff delivering services in the areas outlined above being on the appropriate voluntary registers. We will of course copy you into this communication.

Yours sincerely



Professor Sue Hill
Chief Scientific Officer



Nick Clarke
Head of Health and Social Care Regulation