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Iechyd Cyhoeddus
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Public Health
Wales

Name of Meeting
Quality, Safety and
Improvement Committee

Date of Meeting

19 August 2021

Agenda item:

5.4

Audit of arrangements within Public Health Wales for verifying active professional registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for 2020/21

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Author:

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Approval/Scrutiny route: Business Executive Team (6 July 2021)

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide assurance to the Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee that Public Health Wales has an efficient and functioning system in place to monitor and verify active professional registration with the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) for nurses and midwives, and with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for healthcare scientists and allied healthcare professionals.

Recommendation:

APPROVE	CONSIDER	RECOMMEND	ADOPT	ASSURANCE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The Committee is asked to:

- ❖ **Receive assurance** that the arrangements set out within the paper are fit for the purpose stated

Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	7 - Building and mobilising knowledge and skills to improve health and well-being across Wales
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	6-Supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system focused on prevention and early intervention
Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective	Choose an item.

Summary impact analysis

Equality and Health Impact Assessment	No decision is required therefore no Equality and Health Impact Assessment has been conducted.
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Risk and Assurance	There is a risk that harm will be caused to a service user by a nurse/midwife or HCPC registrant who is practicing without the required professional registration.
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Health and Care Standards	This report supports and/or takes into account the Health and Care Standards for NHS Wales Quality Themes Theme 7 - Staff and Resources Theme 2 - Safe Care Choose an item.
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Financial implications	Potential financial and reputational damage
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People implications	If sufficient systems are not in place to ensure our registrants maintain their professional status, there will implications to service delivery across the organisation
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1.0 Purpose / situation

The purpose of this paper is to provide assurance that arrangements are in place within Public Health Wales (during 2020/21) to ensure health professionals are registered with the appropriate statutory regulating body (Nursing and Midwifery Council, or Health and Care Professions Council). This audit is conducted on an annual basis as part of the wider clinical governance arrangements across Public Health Wales and covers the periods between the 31st of March 2020 and 1st of April 2021.

2.0 Background

2.1 Public Health Wales employs approximately 129 nurses / midwives and currently 340 registered healthcare scientists / allied healthcare professionals. To practise within their professional capacity, a number of staff are required to hold active registration with either the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) or with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (if working in a role as a Healthcare Scientists). It is recognised that a number of NMC Registrants are currently employed within roles that do not require an active registration with their professional body, but they have demonstrated through the 3 yearly revalidation process that they have met the required standards to maintain their professional registration e.g. senior management roles, quality improvement.

2.2 There is a direct live link between ESR and the NMC and HCPC registers to facilitate real-time updating of professional registration status. When an expiry date is approaching, the employee and manager will receive a notification from ESR reminding them that registration is due for renewal. This link system went live in 2018, and with the HCPC register in 2019. The 2019/20 registration audit identified a number of cases where this link failed to identify Public Health Wales staff who were on the HCPC register. The primary reason was identified as variances in personal details (either to a change in family name, or inclusion of a middle initial).

2.3 The annual audit is undertaken across the organisation to confirm that processes are in place to verify NMC and HCPC registration. In the case of HCPC registrants, there is also a requirement for United Kingdom Accreditation Services (UKAS) accreditation. This is ensure they have met the recognised international standards for undertaking accredited tests, inspection and calibration of machinery required for their role. UKAS Accreditation is organised by the Quality Managers within the Screening and Microbiology Services Divisions.

3.0 Description/Assessment

The audit and assurance processes for each of the Health Professions Council have been developed separately, partly due to different arrangements for establishing links between ESR and the professions Council registers.

The sections below have been separated under respective Council headings:-

3.1 Nursing and Midwifery Council

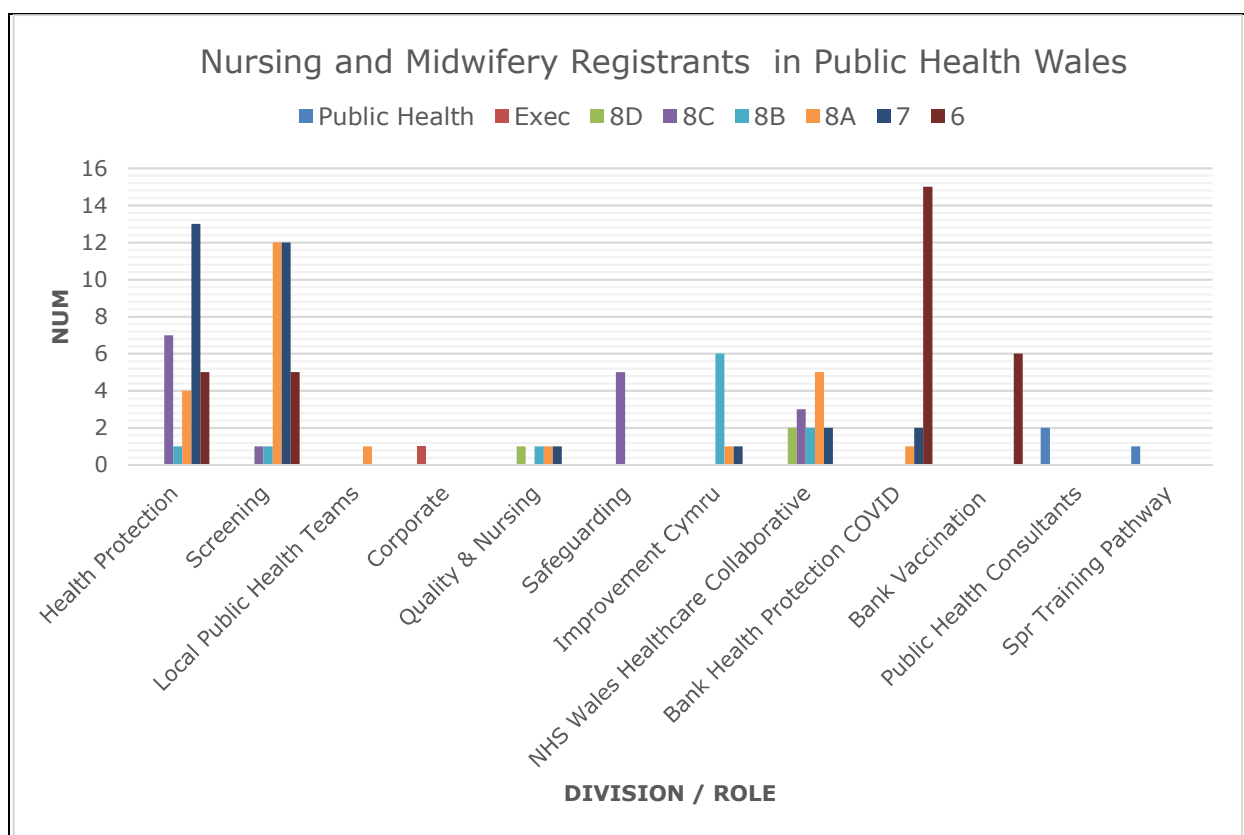
In addition to the ESR automated system, a review was undertaken where all details generated by the automated system were cross-referenced with the online NMC register and nominated line managers contacted to confirm their process for verifying NMC registration. The audit identified that a total of 129 nursing / midwifery staff were identified between the ESR and PHW systems as holding an NMC registration / PIN Number.

The Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 was enacted in March 2016. Section 25a of the Act relates to the overarching responsibility placed on each Health Board or Trust to ensure that they have robust workforce plans, recruitment strategies, structures, and processes in place to ensure appropriate staffing across their organisations. We are currently developing mechanisms to better identify any deficits in staffing and will continue to improve our monitoring arrangements, including (where required) business cases to increase our establishment within key areas. Analysis of nursing and midwifery registrants employed by Public Health Wales are at **Table 1** (below) & **Table 2** (overleaf):

Table 1

Number	Description / Comments
93	Registrants employed by Public Health Wales
1	Career Break
4	Internal Secondment
2	External Secondment
2	Consultants in Public Health
1	SpR Training Pathway
2	Registration Lapsed – but not required for role, link maintained by ESR due to NMC PIN number remaining on the system
2	Temporary NMC Covid Register
21	Bank Staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ 15 – Supporting National Covid Response❖ 6 – Supporting Internal Immunisation Campaigns
Total 129	Numbers Identified by ESR Link

Table 2



3.2 Health and Care Professions Council

Number of HCPC-registered staff: Assessment of automated link between ESR and HCPC Register

Key findings from previous audits (2019/20) and (2020/21) were that a number of staff positions had been established on ESR in the incorrect Staff Group, and further work was undertaken to address the root-cause. While numbers have been reduced significantly, a further 26 HCPC-registered staff positions through this year’s audit have been identified as allocated to the wrong staff group.

299 Public Health Wales staff identified as HCPC registrants through the automated ESR link to the HCPC register. To determine the accuracy of the data, a manual search was carried out for every Public Health Wales staff record for staff within the following ESR Staff Groups:

- ❖ Additional Clinical Services, Administrative & Clerical
- ❖ Allied Healthcare Professions
- ❖ Healthcare Sciences

This method identified 340 Public Health Wales staff (330 Healthcare Scientists and 10 Allied Healthcare Professionals), all of whom were separately checked against the HCPC register and confirmed to be currently registered.

These comprised:

- ❖ 246 Biomedical Scientists and Clinical Scientists
- ❖ 73 Radiographers
- ❖ 21 staff involved in a range of other roles including Bioinformatics and Managerial.

The 10 AHP staff included among the groups identified above, were registered with HCPC as: Physiotherapist (3); Dietician (3); Occupational Therapist (2); Practitioner Psychologist (1); Speech and Language Therapist (1).

The 41 discrepant staff records (identified by manual counting but not found by the automated link between ESR and the HCPC register) were investigated further to identify any root-cause for this. Eleven (11/44) were found to have a different name on the HCPC register compared to the corresponding ESR record (the search algorithm between ESR and the HCPC register is sensitive to even a single character difference in name). These 11 were the same members of staff identified in the 2020-21 audit, confirming that the search algorithm has the same level of sensitivity to name differences as previously.

No obvious root-cause was identified for the remaining 30 records. In the 2020-21 audit, 33 discrepant records were identified in this category, but only a small number of those 33 were among the current 30 discrepant records. This confirms that previous errors were mostly addressed. Following discussion with the PHW ESR Manager, it is suggested that the two most likely sources of error are either during ESR set-up of new posts where the need for HCPC registration was not recorded or are due to more general data quality issues. Consequently, the ESR Manager has proposed undertaking a data validation exercise to ensure that all HCPC registration numbers and expiry dates are recorded on ESR.

Other issues identified on ESR database

Records found, containing other errors were as follows:

- ❖ 26 Staff within the COVID 19 Directorate with the protected Job Title 'Biomedical Scientist' (BMS) were found to be Trainee BMS staff. The records have been sent to the relevant Manager and these ESR records are being amended.
- ❖ 34 Associate Practitioners were incorrectly placed in 'Healthcare Science' ESR Staff Group. These will be moved to the correct Staff Group ('Additional Clinical Services').

Conclusions

- ❖ 340 Public Health Wales staff are currently registered with HCPC.
- ❖ 41/320 staff registered as HCPC practitioners were not identified using the automated ESR database search of the HCPC register.
- ❖ 11 of these 41 were explained by differences in name between the ESR and HCPC database records.
- ❖ Further work is planned to undertake a data validation exercise to ensure that all HCPC registration numbers and expiry dates are recorded on ESR.

3.3 Fitness to Practise

In order to practise, registrants must have the skills, knowledge, character, and health to practice safely and effectively within their profession. Public Health Wales has a duty to ensure that employees are competent and remain competent for their role. The professional bodies (NMC & HCPC) are there to protect the public from registrants whose fitness to practise is impaired, and whose situation cannot be managed locally. A review of any fitness to practise referrals are detailed below.

To strengthen governance and accountability arrangements within the organisation, a referral and escalation process, aligned to the Public Health Wales Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, is currently being established.

Professional Regulating Body	No. Staff requiring registration.	Registration Compliance (%)	Fitness to Practice Referrals	Comments
HCPC	340	340/340 (100%)	3	1 referred to HCPC in 2018, 2020 HCPC determined no case to answer 1 referred to HCPC 2020, further information provided as requested, awaiting outcome 1 referred to HCPC 2019, awaiting outcome
NMC	123	123/123 (100%)	0	

3.4 Update to Proposed NMC Audit Procedure for 2020/21 and 2021/22

As part of our Quality and Improvement programme for 2020/21, an objective was to update the current NMC Registration audit tool and the approach to monitoring compliance with NMC registration and revalidation. However, due to staff deployment to support the National Covid Response, this work was unable to be undertaken during 2020/21. It is therefore planned to be undertaken in 2021/22.

Planned Next Steps:

- ❖ Review existing documentation
- ❖ Engagement with senior leaders to review current processes for confirming NMC registration status in Directorates and Divisions
- ❖ Develop a set of standards for nursing and midwifery registration across the organisation
- ❖ Develop audit tool based on the developed standards
- ❖ Undertake small scale change through one identified area, to trial the process before implementing across the organisation.

Update to HCPC Registration Audit Procedure 2020/21

The audit for HCPC registration has included a preliminary assessment of whether Public Health Wales staff currently on the register require this to be maintained in order to carry out their current duties (including routine cover for colleagues during planned or unplanned absence, or redeployment to a practitioner role as part of emergency planning). Initial focus is on staff on the HCPC register whose ESR job title does not include an HCPC protected title. Preliminary findings are that all such staff are currently undertaking or may be required to undertake (to cover annual leave of colleagues or as part of an emergency response) work where HCPC registration is required. It is essential that such staff are given the opportunity to undertake the necessary CPD activity and are fully supported in maintaining all relevant competencies in order to be able to remain on the Register. Inclusion of these within My Contribution discussions, would underpin professional support.

The Public Health Wales Professional AHP / Science Lead and People & OD Systems Development Manager have previously jointly initiated a project to identify a minimum ESR dataset for all HCPC practitioner posts within Public Health Wales. The findings from the current audit will be used to inform further development of this.

The Public Health Wales Professional AHP / Science Lead and People & OD Systems Development Manager are also undertaking an options appraisal for ensuring that all new appointees who require HCPC registration are identified accurately on ESR. This will involve determining whether ESR

can reliably capture recruitment information relating to HCPC registration being essential and, if not, whether this can be embedded within the ESR registration process for new staff. This project was delayed due to the CoVID-19 emergency response and will be commenced in 2021-22.

End of year HCPC comments:

- ❖ Significant recruitment has taken place of Healthcare scientists within 2020-21 as part of the CoVID-19 emergency response. This is reflected in the increased number of staff identified through the current audit.
- ❖ Issues remain around some HCPC-registered staff on ESR not being identified by the automated search conducted using the ESR/HCPC interface. As confirmed in the previous audit, this is due to differences in name (family name or middle initial) entered into the ESR and HCPC database. Requesting staff to amend their record on one or other of the databases to ensure consistency, would resolve this for the outstanding discrepant records, but would not preclude the same issue arising in the future for other staff. Thus, work is currently underway to determine whether a robust process can be developed ensuring all ESR positions requiring HCPC registration can have this identified on ESR. Nevertheless, the current audit methodology, which underpins the automated checking of the register with manual checking, while laborious, offers strong assurance of compliance.
- ❖ Although not a specific remit of this paper, a significant number of additional staff are employed within Public Health Wales as Assistant or Associate Practitioners and, in the case of the Healthcare Sciences, at Practitioner level but not requiring registration with HCPC. This is on the basis that these staff do not have a direct impact on individual patient/client outcome. Nevertheless, their role within PHW, as a public health body advising Welsh and UK Government on national policy development, can be critical. Thus, further work is proposed to review current internal arrangements for determining competency and to confirm full support is provided for appropriate CPD.

4.0 Conclusion

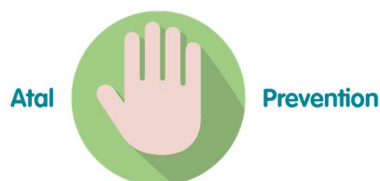
BET and the relevant Committee can take assurance from the registrant audit that there are demonstrable, recognised processes in place within all Directorates to verify professional registration for both NMC and HCPC registrants employed within Public Health Wales.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The report contributes to Goal 3 "Support the NHS to deliver high quality, equitable and sustainable services". The report follows the five ways of working, as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act, in the following ways:



An annual audit is conducted to ensure that the organisation is compliant with legal requirements for the registration of nursing and midwifery and healthcare sciences, enabling the organisation to plan its services, functions, and programmes over the following year.



The organisation is acting to prevent problems occurring by ensuring a system is in place to support staff in complying with their registration requirements.



The audit impacts on a number of the wellbeing goals, including "A Resilient Wales."



The audit is conducted across all of Public Health Wales, with the relevant Directorate and staff collaborating to complete the requirements of the audit.



All staff involved in conducting the audit have been update regarding the findings.

5.0 Recommendation

Committee is asked to:

- ❖ **Receive assurance** that the arrangements set out within the paper are fit for the purpose stated