

**Health Professions Council – Consultation on updating the
'Guidance on health and character'.**

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British Association of Social Workers – (BASW) response to HPC consultation on updating 'Guidance on health and character'.

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the largest professional association for social workers in the UK. Social work is an international profession working with adults and children to analyse individual and social situations, to enable individuals to change or be sustained in their lives, and to act as a catalyst for social change. The Association has over 13,500 members employed in front line, management, academic and research positions. Many BASW members are registered as social workers with the General Social Care Council and have an acute interest in changes and development in registration.

BASW's Response.

1. Is the guidance clear about what a self-declaration is, and what the implications of making a self-declaration about health are? Could it be improved? If so, how?

The guidance is clear. However, we are not sure whether the guidance would ensure consistency in self-declarations about health, ie an illness, condition or disability affecting someone's fitness to practise. From the fact that the HPC rarely refuses registration based on information received, it would appear that most people are referred by others or self-declare erroneously. An explanation for this is that sometimes the guidance implies the applicant or registrant should mention health issues which **might** affect their ability to practise safely and appropriately ('You only need to declare information about a health condition if you believe that your health **may** affect your ability to practise safely and effectively. If you tell us you have a health condition that **might** affect your fitness to practise, we will use the information you give us to decide whether you should be registered.' Also there is reference to 'a health condition that **could** affect your fitness to practise' in the 'Implications of making a self-declaration' section), and this would lead to self-declarations which upon analysis are judged not to be an issue. However, reference is also made to self-declaration in much more concrete terms, implying applicants and registrants only need to self-declare on health if they are sure their illness, condition or disability **is** affecting their fitness to practice ('We do not need information about any health condition **unless it affects a person's fitness to practise**'). This could lead to two people with similar health issues taking different courses of action. It is not clear whether it is the individual who should make the decision about whether a health issue affects fitness to practise or the HPC, and the phrasing of this would seem to suggest that the decision should be remitted to the HPC despite the statement that 'we are trusting you as an autonomous professional to make an informed and reasoned judgement about whether your health will affect your ability to practise safely and effectively.'

The character declaration seems much clearer with a list of information that needs to be shared around involvement with the criminal justice system, disciplinary proceedings or civil proceedings.

2. Is the guidance clear about how a registrant can show insight and understanding into their own health? Could it be improved? If so, how?

This looks fine. The examples are helpful.

3. Is the guidance clear about how the HPC uses information an applicant or registrant gives us about their health? Could it be improved? If so, how?

This is clear.

4. Is the guidance clear about what a self-referral is, and how a registrant makes one? Could it be improved? If so, how?

This is clear.

5. Is the guidance clear about how the HPC will use the information given to us during the self-referral process? Could it be improved? If so, how?

This is clear.

6. Do you have any other comments on the changes we are making to the 'Guidance on health and character'?

The guidance refers from time to time to becoming or registering as 'a health professional.' We trust this will be changed to 'health or social work professional.'

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Manager of BASW, England.**