

## Response to the Health and Care Professions Council's consultation: Draft standards for the use of exemptions by orthoptists

May 2016

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care 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](http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk).
- 1.2 As part of our work we:
- Oversee nine health and care professional regulators and report annually to Parliament on their performance
  - Conduct research and advise the four UK governments on improvements in regulation
  - Promote right-touch regulation and publish papers on regulatory policy and practice.
- 1.3 We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation about the draft standards for the use of exemptions by orthoptists to sell, supply and administer medicines. We offer some general comments, but have not responded to individual consultation questions.

### 2. General comments.

- 2.1 We welcome the HCPC's objective of improving standards for orthoptists by allowing orthoptists exemptions when buying, selling or administering medicine.
- 2.2 In our report on *Advanced Practice*, we said that regulators may need to act to reduce risk to the public<sup>1</sup> if the nature of a professional's practice becomes 'fundamentally different' from their scope of practice at initial registration.
- 2.3 On the basis that this extension of practice is a significant change to the scope of practice of orthoptists and appears to create new risks to the public, we support the HCPC's proposals. In *Advanced Practice*, we concluded that where extensions of practice were associated with particular qualifications and created new risks to public safety, it would be appropriate to link protection of title or function directly to the qualification and annotate a register entry'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Advanced Practice: Report to the four UK Health Departments, 2009, Pg. 1. Available at: <http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/default-source/publications/advice-to-ministers/advanced-practice-2009.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg.11.

- 2.4 When expanding the role of a profession, the risk to public protection involved should be assessed. The HCPC consultation makes reference to other professions where exemptions have been put in place (chiropractors) to allude to the safety risks of such an expansion of remit to orthoptists. However, this does not directly deal with potential public safety issues which occur specifically as a result of orthoptists being able to sell, supply and administer medicines.
- 2.5 We note that there is no mention of wider implications of the exemptions in the document. For example, fitness to practise functions may be affected by the changes, and there may need to be guidance for panellists considering allegations against a registrant that relate to their power to prescribe under the exemption.

### **3. Further information**

- 3.1 Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspect of this response in further detail. You can contact us at:

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