

COUNCIL

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Stakeholder Reference Groups

For information

Issue:

In line with its Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and the decision taken by Council on 2 April 2009, the GOC will create two stakeholder reference groups (SRGs). The groups will provide stakeholder input into GOC policies and projects.

Recommendation:

Council is invited to note the proposals for establishing two SRGs.

Annexes:

The following annexes are attached to this paper:

- Annex 1: Terms of reference and structure
- Annex 2: Project plan
- Annex 3: Project schedule
- Annex 4: Other regulators' SRG expenses policies

Further information:

If you would like further information about this paper please contact:

Clare March
020 7307 3473
cmarch@optical.org

Simon Grier
020 7307 3478
sgrier@optical.org

GOC Stakeholder Reference Groups

For information

Background/Introduction:

1. Council resolved on 2 April 2009 to establish two stakeholder reference groups - one representing patients and the public; and one representing optical professionals (including representative bodies).
2. Establishing two stakeholder reference groups (SRG) was originally planned for 2009-10, but has since been deferred to 2010-11.
3. Under the Opticians Act 1989, the GOC Council (including their staff and their committees) must have proper regard for the interests of its stakeholder groups, and cooperate with relevant bodies or individuals concerned with employment or education of GOC registrants, or regulation and management of other health professionals or services. These duties are summarised in the Council's stakeholder engagement strategy, which requires the GOC to engage with the following groups:
 - Registrants
 - Potential registrants
 - Service users
 - Partners
4. At its November 2009 meeting, Council considered the membership and format of the SRGs, in particular whether existing groups might be used to meet the duties. Drawing on the experience of other organisations, and best practice governance approaches, it was concluded that both the membership and remit of SRGs differed significantly from that of the committees, whose role is to provide expert advice. Council's strategic role would also mean that much of the work requiring SRG input would not be suitable for Council (eg reviewing information leaflets). It was also concluded that using optical professionals who are not already involved in the GOC, who come with no prior knowledge of the Council's work, would offer an impartial and objective perspective which would be beneficial. The establishment of SRGs was also likely to be a more cost-effective option than using committees to carry out this work.
5. However, the desire for flexibility and the ability to review these arrangements has been reflected in the proposals for establishing and implementing two SRGs, attached. The SRGs will initially run as one year pilots.
6. At its November meeting, Council also discussed holding a SRG 'open day event' on 22 September 2010. An outline of this launch meeting is also included in the annex.
7. It should be noted that the SRGs are just one mechanism through which the GOC will continue to engage with its stakeholders.

Discussion:

8. Council is invited to note the proposals for establishing two SRGs.

Resource implications:

9. Resource implications for this project are outlined in Annex 2.

Equality and diversity implications:

Has an Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment been carried out?

10. Yes – implications for equality and diversity are outlined in Annex 2.

Human Rights Act implications:

Has a Human Act Rights Impact Assessment been carried out?

11. Yes – implications for human rights are outlined in Annex 2.

Stakeholder engagement:

Has the Consultation Checklist been completed?

12. Yes – implications for stakeholder engagement are outlined in Annex 2.

GOC Stakeholder Reference Groups – structure and terms of reference

Overview

1. There will be two Stakeholder Reference Groups (SRGs) – one for stakeholders involved in optics (Optical Group) and one for those who are not (Patient Group).
2. The role of both groups is to advise the GOC on its work, projects and priorities.
3. We will recruit a pool of twelve members for each of the groups. The whole group will meet annually for a full-day networking/ facilitated discussion. Other meetings will be smaller, more ‘focus-group’ like and will be held according to the business need, rather than at set intervals. Members will be selected from the pool as required, in a similar way to education visitors and FTP panellists, aiming to use the members with interests and experiences suited to the task in hand.
4. The rest of the work given to group members will be in the form of ‘e-engagement’ exercises to be conducted remotely.
5. The groups will initially run as one year pilots. The GOC will then review the terms of reference and membership based on whether they prove to be an effective way of getting stakeholder input into GOC work.
6. Members will not sign a contract of employment. The groups will be treated as a voluntary position with small payments possible to recompense for time out of work or practice (**see remuneration section**).
7. All engagement with the SRGs will be managed by the Communications Department so that the groups’ workload is managed effectively. Where projects would benefit from SRG feedback, staff, members and committees should always coordinate this through the Communications Department in the first instance.

Membership

8. The Optical Group will comprise twelve members. We will aim to have representation from the following groups:
 - a. Optometrists;
 - b. Dispensing opticians;
 - c. Optical students;
 - d. Optical employers;
 - e. Optical education providers;
 - f. Ophthalmologists; or
 - g. Staff of optical professional/representative organisations:

9. The Patient Group will also comprise twelve members. To ensure that the group offers a genuinely independent public viewpoint, none should have an optical qualification nor work in optics.
10. The selection of members will be at the discretion of the GOC.
11. Membership will be subject to review after a year as this is a pilot scheme, although it is anticipated that members will serve for three years on the group. In order to retain a fresh approach on the group, after three years, members will be ineligible for the groups for a further three years.
12. Both groups should have representation from each of the four countries of the UK.
13. GOC staff and Council members will be entitled to attend group discussions as observers.
14. The groups will not have a formal chair; meetings will be run and facilitated either independently or by a GOC member of staff. This will depend on the workload and the type of meeting.
15. Balance of groups: Overall, the groups should represent a balanced mix of qualities, skills and experience and seek to reflect the diversity of both the profession (specifically optometrists and dispensing opticians) and the public.

Purpose and duties

16. The purpose of the groups is to provide input to the policy and project development of the GOC. This may mean discussing a particular policy such as revalidation, reviewing the suitability of consultation questions or feeding back on a project such as a leaflet or changes to the website.
17. The groups will provide a patient/public or optical input into these policies and projects. The input will be in an advisory capacity and the groups will have no authority over Council, committees or members of staff.
18. The duties of the groups are as follows:
 - a. To contribute to GOC policy developments and provide the optical, patient and public perspective; and
 - b. To encourage and assist in the development of greater patient and public involvement in all aspects of the GOC work.

Mechanisms for feedback and reporting

19. Any member of the groups wishing to propose an item for discussion or review at a meeting should notify the Communications team at least 14 days before the meeting.

20. All e-engagement exercises will be circulated with a deadline for responses. This will vary according to how urgent and time-consuming the work is.
21. In line with our Stakeholder Consultation Framework, we will feed back to participants as to how their contributions are used. This feedback will be compiled either by the independent facilitator or by the Communications Department.

Responsibilities

22. All members will:

- a. Contribute positively and openly to the work of the groups; and
- b. Read any necessary documents in preparation for the e-engagement exercise or the meeting.

23. GOC staff will:

- a. Co-ordinate e-engagement exercises as required to meet the business needs;
- b. Arrange meetings as required to meet organisational needs; and
- c. Circulate a report or summary of member feedback and how it is used.

24. A fee of £50 will be payable to self-funded members¹ for each full-day (over four hours, including time spent travelling) spent attending any meetings/ focus groups in person. A fee of £25 will be paid for a period of less than four hours. This is to cover for time out of work or practice.

25. All transport, where possible, will be booked by the GOC for group members. It is not anticipated that overnight stays will be required and meetings will be timed to accommodate this.

26. In the event that the GOC is not able to book required travel on behalf of members, self-funded members are entitled to claim the following out-of-pocket expenses:

- a. Payments actually made for the most cost effective standard-class travel by rail, sea or air, including supplements and necessary use of taxis. This will normally be up to a £150 limit though in exceptional circumstances, and by prior agreement, a higher limit may be possible; and
- b. For travel by private car, 40p per mile up to £150.

27. The GOC is entirely funded by its registrants and does not pay expenses for first class travel. Please see **Annex 4** for how this compares to the expenses that other regulators pay.

¹ Members who are attending in a personal capacity and not representing an organisation for whom they are working in a paid capacity, or which can be reasonably expected to pay their travel expenses.

Selection criteria

28. Applicants must complete an application form (including a personal statement), and an equality and diversity monitoring form.
29. Because the positions are voluntary, the application form will not be too complicated or time-consuming as this will put off potential applicants. Personal details and a personal statement outlining why they want to join the group and how they demonstrate a short list of up to four personal qualities will be sufficient.
30. We will not normally interview candidates. We will seek to judge applicants on the basis of their application form and personal statement. We will possibly interview any 'borderline' candidates by telephone.
31. Personal attributes. Candidates must be able to demonstrate:
 - a. An interest in, and enthusiasm for, healthcare;
 - b. A desire to communicate;
 - c. Ability to work in a team; and
 - d. Ability to work independently.
32. Candidates should also be willing and able to travel to London occasionally.

Equality and diversity

33. We want to ensure our Committees are as diverse as the public we protect, so we welcome applications regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith or disability.
34. We will produce materials in accessible formats on request.
35. We will produce materials in Welsh (and other languages) on request.
36. The GOC values diversity and all of our procedures are fair, transparent and free from discrimination. We will select all SRG members solely on merit. To ensure we are treating candidates fairly, we monitor all stages of the recruitment process.

SRG launch meeting – September 2010

37. It is anticipated that event will be held in London on 22 September.
38. The groups will meet separately and will also have an opportunity to network with each other and with Council.
39. The event will provide the groups with an introduction to the GOC and its work so that SRG members are able to make useful and informed contributions to GOC projects and policies.

40. We will consider the use of technology such as interactive voting buttons if this appropriate for the type of work being considered by the group.

Advertisement – Optical Group

41. The Optical Group vacancies will be advertised in the same way as the committee vacancies last year. This was cost-effective and had a strong response from registrants. This involved:
- a. Press release to the optical journals;
 - b. Press release to the optical bodies;
 - c. Direct email to all registrants, either through *eBulletin* (if the schedule fits) or a standalone e-mail; and
 - d. The GOC website

Advertisement – Public Group

42. To achieve a balanced mix of participants and target some seldom-heard groups, we will seek to advertise:
- a. In the volunteering section of *The Guardian* (if possible)
 - b. In *Society Guardian* otherwise
 - c. On the Guardian Jobs website
 - d. Through the JobCentre Plus network
 - e. In eye hospitals and optical clinics of Universities
 - f. Through local LINKs co-ordinators
 - g. If possible, through the multiples' in-store magazines
 - h. Through patient organisations and charities. (We have a large range of organisations on our stakeholder list that can help us to reach seldom-heard groups.)
 - i. On the GOC website

PROJECT PLAN

Title	Communications – Stakeholder Reference Groups (SRGs)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit a new pool of individuals to contribute stakeholder opinions to the work of the GOC. • For the contributions of SRG members to be valuable to the GOC in delivering its business plan.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit two ‘Stakeholder Reference Groups’; one for stakeholders in optics (registrants, employers, academics, etc) and one for patients and the public. • Co-ordinate and circulate e-engagement exercises regularly throughout the year to gain feedback from the groups on GOC projects and policies. • Host and facilitate at least one event per year for all members and smaller, focus-group style meetings as required to meet the business needs.
Relevant CHRE performance review standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>5.1 i) The regulators’ decision-making is underpinned by up-to-date stakeholder and management information and is directed to protecting, promoting and maintaining the health, safety and well-being of the public.</i> • <i>5.4 i) The regulator engages with stakeholders, in particular patients and the public, in all of its work.</i>
Linked projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to any project where the GOC is seeking stakeholder feedback, in particular for publications or policies which require stakeholder consultation.
Project team/approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work will be carried out by the Communications team. Approval and sign-off will be by the Director of Communications and Information and the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development.
Impact assessments	

Risks	<p>Perception: An expensive recruitment process carries a risk of criticism for perceived excessive cost. This will be mitigated by keeping the membership of each group to twelve and ensuring that costs to recruit and fund the groups are minimal. Monitoring stakeholder feedback throughout the project, and adapting communication and future work plans, will also help to mitigate this risk.</p> <p>Financial: The allocated budget may be insufficient to cover the costs of recruiting and running the SRGs. To mitigate this risk, the majority of work of the SRGs will take place electronically and the level of activity will be monitored and managed throughout the year to ensure costs do not exceed budget. Meetings in person will generally take the form of smaller ‘focus groups’ that will not require all 12 members to be present at once. Limiting the pool of SRG members to 24 will also help to mitigate this risk.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement: The GOC could become over-reliant on the SRGs as being the only form of stakeholder engagement required. It is important that the GOC continues to engage with stakeholders through its existing channels to ensure a wide range of balanced stakeholder opinion.</p> <p>Value of contributions: The groups could become populated by people with a single-issue interest who want to use them purely to lobby and will not make useful contributions to a variety of areas of GOC work. This risk must be mitigated by sensible recruitment policies to recruit groups with a wide and diverse interest in optics and healthcare generally, who will add value to the GOC.</p>
Human rights	The project does not engage any Convention rights.
Equality and diversity, including Welsh language	<p>The recruitment process must be robust to make sure it selects people against four personal attributes (to be mainly demonstrated in their personal statement), and does not discriminate on any grounds.</p> <p>When the groups are established, all reasonable adjustments will be made for members with disabilities. We have the provision to translate work into Welsh (and other languages) on request.</p>
Stakeholder engagement	The project involves regular consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. It is hoped that it will greatly improve the GOC’s stakeholder engagement efforts.
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This project falls under the Council budget ▪ Total budget of £44,800
Timescales	See Annex 3.

Stakeholder Reference Groups
Project Schedule

C(07)10
ANNEX 3

Project timeline	LEAD	APPROVALS	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
1 Draft terms of reference	SG	CM, Council	15-Feb							
2 Candidate information pack	SG	CM, LO		26-Mar						
3 Application and equal opportunities form	SG	CM, LO		26-Mar						
4 Expenses policy	SG	CM		26-Mar						
5 Selection criteria	SG	CM, LO		26-Mar						
6 Decision on where to advertise	SG	CM, LO		26-Mar						
7 Advert designed if necessary	SG	CM		26-Mar						
8 Complaints policy	SG	CM, LO		26-Mar						
9 Advert open					7 Apr - 5 May					
10 Shortlist/sift candidates	CM	LO				28-May				
11 Telephone interviews of candidates	CM	LO					25-Jun			
12 Plan launch event	SG	CM				Book venue by end of May				
13 Hold launch event	SG	CM								22-Sep

Other regulators' expenses policies

GMC

For stakeholder reference groups (SRGs):

- Members get expenses to cover a standard-class flexible train ticket, air fare or 40p a mile.
- Members also get:
 - 4p per page of printing ;
 - A £20ph fee for remote working;
 - £75 for a half-day at a physical meeting (<4 hours including travel time); and
 - £150 for a full day (>4 hours).

For engagement events such as consultations:

- The GMC does not pay expenses as it believes that the majority of people who attend these events do so as representatives of an organisation. The organisation itself would therefore usually cover the costs.

GCC

For SRG:

- The GCC's Communications Advisory Group is currently composed of volunteers. They are, however, considering paying them £80 per day for attending meetings; and
- The GCC pay travel expenses and, if necessary, hotels and subsistence to group members.

CHRE

For involvement events

- CHRE reimburse travel expenses for the self-funding or unemployed;
- Delegates must choose the most cost-effective method of transport; and
- Delegates must clear their travel plans with CHRE before booking so that CHRE can judge them to be reasonable.

GSCC

For involvements events, education visits, etc

- The GSCC pay people for involvement. Depending on how demanding they see the work as, they pay either £7.50ph or £15ph. Typically attending a public meeting such as a consultation event would earn the former rate; events such as an education visit the latter.
- The GSCC pay travel expenses or book the travel themselves.
- They subscribe to a CAB helpline to help delegates understand the impact on benefits. However, most other regulators seem to leave this as the delegate's own responsibility to look after the benefit implications.

NMC

For involvement events

- The NMC pay out-of-pocket expenses for standard class rail/air or 40p per mile. They expect delegates to choose the most "efficient and cost-effective" method, although there is no mention as to which takes precedence if the most efficient method is not also the most cost-effective.
- They also pay carer and childcare costs.
- They will pay hotel and subsistence costs.
- They will pay £100 a day or £12.50ph as a reward.
- Delegates must discuss their travel plans with the NMC before committing.