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## Education and Training Committee, 7 June 2018

### Findings of the biennial education provider survey – 2016-18

#### Executive summary

As part of the Education Department's ongoing review of the operational processes and supporting activities, we developed an online survey to gather feedback from stakeholders involved in delivering HCPC-approved education and training programmes. The survey was conducted in early 2018, and covers the previous two academic years.

The feedback gathered was broadly positive, with some areas noted for improvement. Where applicable, we have made recommendations through the report, which are collated in the report's appendix.

The results suggest the Executive should focus on the following areas of process improvement over the next financial year:

- More clearly communicate our requirements, including reasons for undertaking particular assessments.
- Electronic only documentary submission for annual monitoring in 2018-19.
- Develop education provider understanding of observations in the approval process.
- Develop the concern process in line with stakeholder feedback, with specific focus on communicating the process more widely.

The Executive also notes that planning work has already begun to ensure we clearly communicate to education providers our requirements around annual monitoring for the 2018-19 academic year clearly, considering that we will:

- require education providers to demonstrate that the revised standards of education and training (SETs) are met by their programme(s); and
- broaden our required evidence to include feedback from service users and carers and practice-based learning.

#### **Discussion**

The Committee is asked to discuss the report, particularly:

- The recommendations – the Education Department will look to incorporate these recommendations into work plans over the next two financial years.
- Any other areas the Committee may wish the Executive to consider based on the outcomes from the survey.

#### **Decision**

- None

**Background information**

- A level of understanding of the Education Department processes is assumed for readers of this report. More information about our processes can be found [on our website](#).

**Resource implications**

- None

**Financial implications**

- None

**Appendices**

- Findings of the biennial education provider survey – 2016-18 report

**Date of paper**

23 May 2018

# Findings of the biennial education provider survey – 2016-18

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## Executive summary

As part of the Education Department's ongoing review of the operational processes and supporting activities, we developed an online survey to gather feedback from stakeholders involved in delivering HCPC-approved education and training programmes. The survey was conducted in early 2018, and covers the previous two academic years. Results from the last survey were produced in June 2016, and have been referenced where appropriate in this report for comparison.

The feedback gathered was broadly positive, with some areas noted for improvement. Where applicable, we have made recommendations through this report, which will be considered by the Executive in development work undertaken by the Department.

A level of understanding of the Education Department processes is assumed for readers of this report. More information about our processes can be found [on our website](#).

## Methodology

We used Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, which was also used for the previous two education provider feedback surveys. We asked 58 questions covering the following areas:

- each of our four operational processes;
- our overall regulatory approach;
- our communications, in particular Education Update and the website; and
- education providers' experience of meeting the service user and carer standard for the first time.

The questions varied in style, with many asking for comments along with quantitative responses, so that respondents could provide further information or reasons for their answers. The survey was designed so that it could be completed in 10-15 minutes. Respondents were able to skip questions or sections that were not relevant to them, for example, if they had not been through the approval process in the last two academic years.

## Respondents

We sent the previous survey to programme leaders only. To broaden the range of responses, we sent this survey to all education contacts linked to programmes. This meant a reduction in the percentage of responses, from 32 percent to 11.3 per cent, but the number of responses increased from 211 to 284. This reduction was likely due to us sending the survey to individuals that are linked to programmes, but may have little to do with the programme's interaction with the HCPC.

Around half of respondents:

- identified their post. Of these, the majority (around 65 per cent) held either programme leader roles, or senior academic / management positions at education providers. The remainder came from programme or quality assurance staff.
- identified their employer, and these respondents named 70 (of the 143 approved) education providers.

Respondents were asked to identify the subject area or areas of the approved programme in which they were involved. We received at least one response from every profession and annotation. Although we received a small number of responses from certain professions and annotations, the response rate was broadly in proportion to the number of programmes.

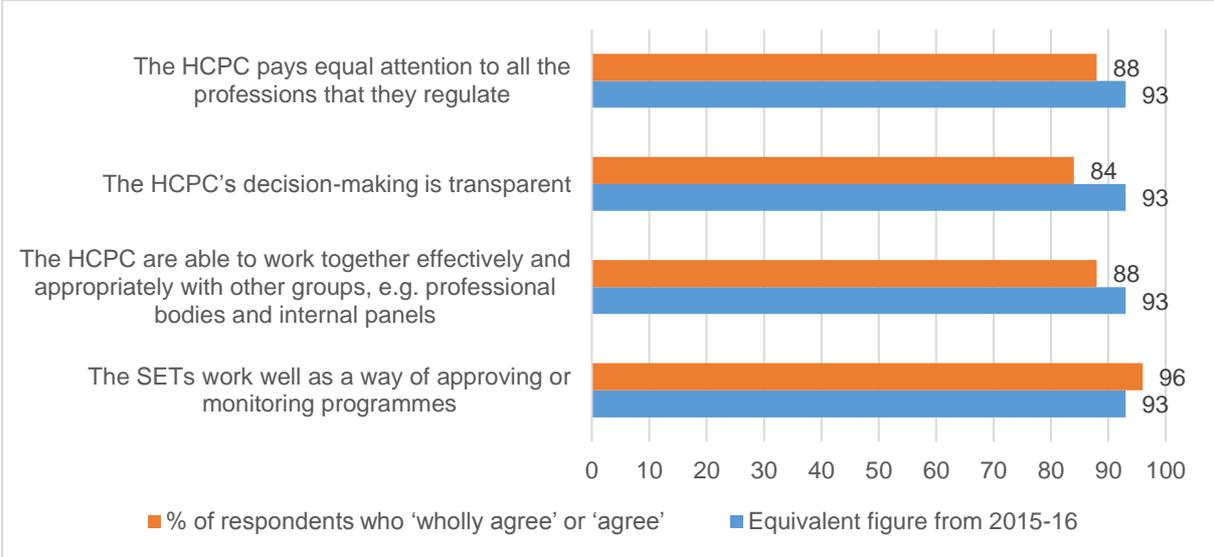
The three professions from which we received the highest numbers of responses were social workers in England (29 per cent of the total responses), paramedics (23 per cent), and physiotherapists (20 per cent). This predominance of social workers was also a feature of the responses to the last report and is to be expected given that they are the largest HCPC-regulated profession and have the largest number of programmes.

The response rate from paramedics is considerably higher than might be expected given their programme share (8 per cent). The long discussed changes to SET 1 for

paramedics<sup>1</sup>, and recent changes to paramedic programmes to deal with workforce supply, have resulted in the profession being particularly engaged with the HCPC, especially when we ask for feedback. This is consistent with the previous survey.

### Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Although there is some drop back from previous results, there is still a high level of satisfaction with the Education Department’s regulatory approach.



Respondents were given an opportunity to comment further. It appeared from some of the comments that there had been issues in particular cases. However, there were some recurring themes:

- Education providers do not always understand why we make decisions, or why we do things a certain way, especially with regard to why we decide to review some changes to approved programmes via the approval process.
- Some respondents perceived an inconsistency in how HCPC visitors operated.

**Recommendation 1:** *Strengthen the communication of reasons for decision-making, including why we choose to use particular processes to review changes to programmes, and when setting conditions.*

**Recommendation 2:** *Consider comments about inconsistency with visitors’ approach to assessment when developing the next round of visitor training.*

**Recommendation 3:** *Continue to ensure visitors’ deliberations and questioning is guided appropriately by executives, so we apply standards consistently.*

### Electronic documentary submissions

Across the approval and annual monitoring processes, there was strong support for an electronic-only document submission. For approvals, 92 per cent of respondents

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10005725Enc12-ThresholdlevelofqualificationforenstrytotheRegisterforParamedics.pdf>

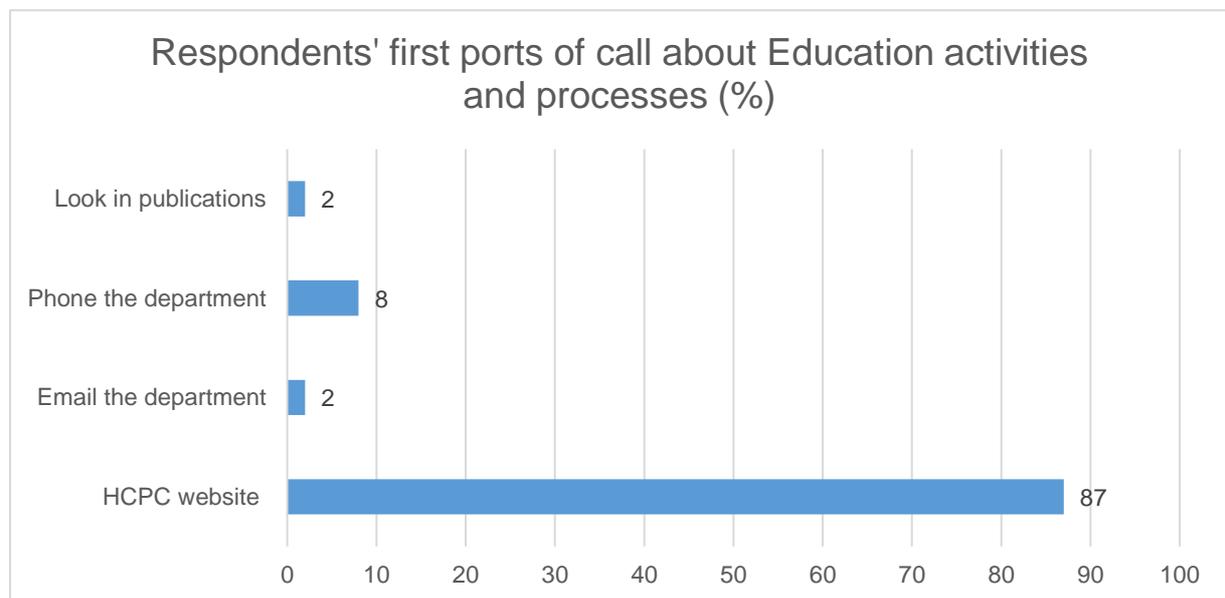
supported this, and for annual monitoring, it was raised by respondents as a suggested improvement. This was also raised by a large number of respondents in the previous survey.

For annual monitoring, we are already planning to introduce electronic only submissions, at this stage being scheduled to start in the 2018-19 academic year.

**Recommendation 4:** *Revisit the feasibility of all-electronic documentary submissions for all processes, following analysis of activity for annual monitoring in 2018-19.*

### Sources of guidance for education providers

We asked where respondents would first seek information about Education Department activities and processes. Unsurprisingly, the majority of respondents said they would use the HCPC website to find the information they need.

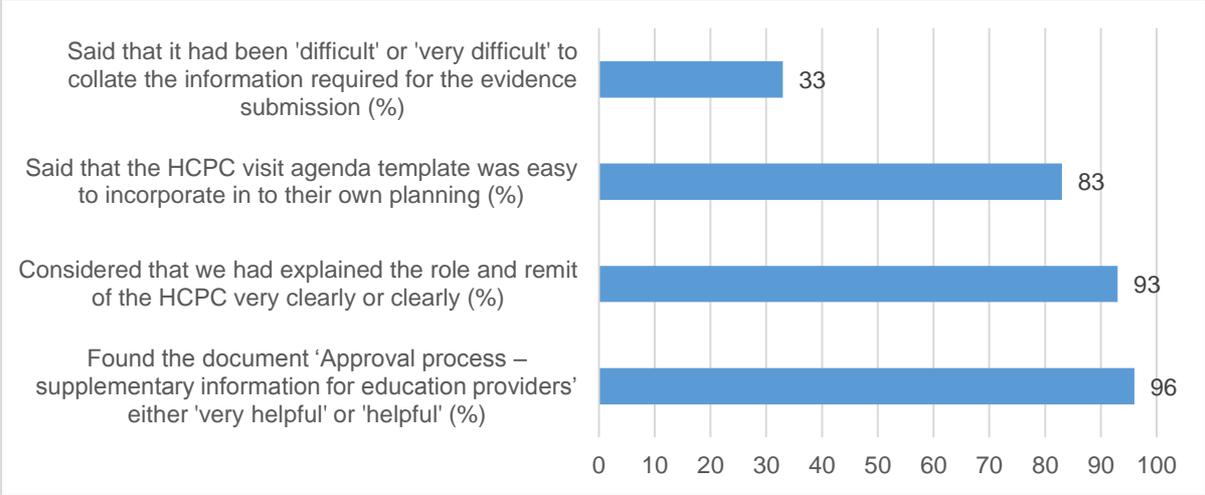


## Section 2: The approval process

Around 40 per cent of the respondents had been through the approval process in 2015-16 or 2016-17. The responses were generally very positive. We have explored particular areas in more detail below.

Relating to timeliness, usefulness and effectiveness of communications with the HCPC during the whole length of the approval process, 96 per cent of respondents said they were either very satisfied or satisfied.

**Pre-visit requirements**

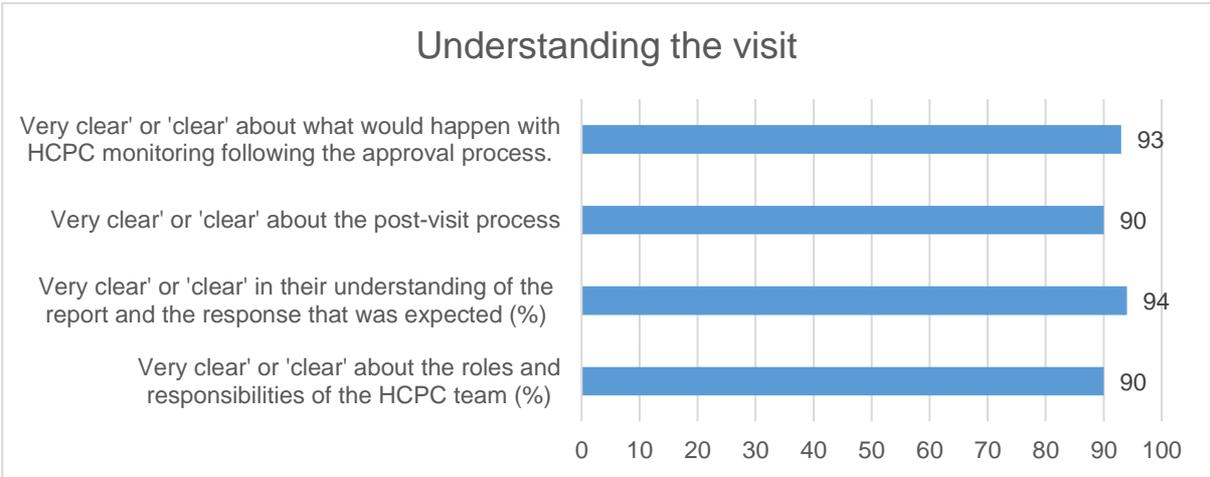


A third of respondents said that it had been difficult or very difficult to collate the information required for the evidence submission. It is difficult to distinguish whether education providers found the process of collating documentation difficult, or whether it was difficult to evidence and map their programme, potentially due its underdevelopment. As we usually consider whether programmes meet all of our standards through the approval process, this process should not always be 'easy' for education providers. We reasonably set a high bar for engaging with the process to ensure we have the evidence required to make our judgements.

Regarding the question about the agenda, the common theme among the responses was they were not clear why the HCPC’s agenda requirements were as they are, and that they were not always explained adequately.

**The visit**

In the questions about experience and understanding of the process itself, the responses were strongly positive.



Some respondents mentioned that we should ensure that visitors were selected appropriately, that their application of the standards was consistent, that they were adequately prepared, and that their questioning at visits was kept relevant. This is consistent with the feedback noted in the Our Regulatory Approach section, and covered by **recommendations 2 and 3**.

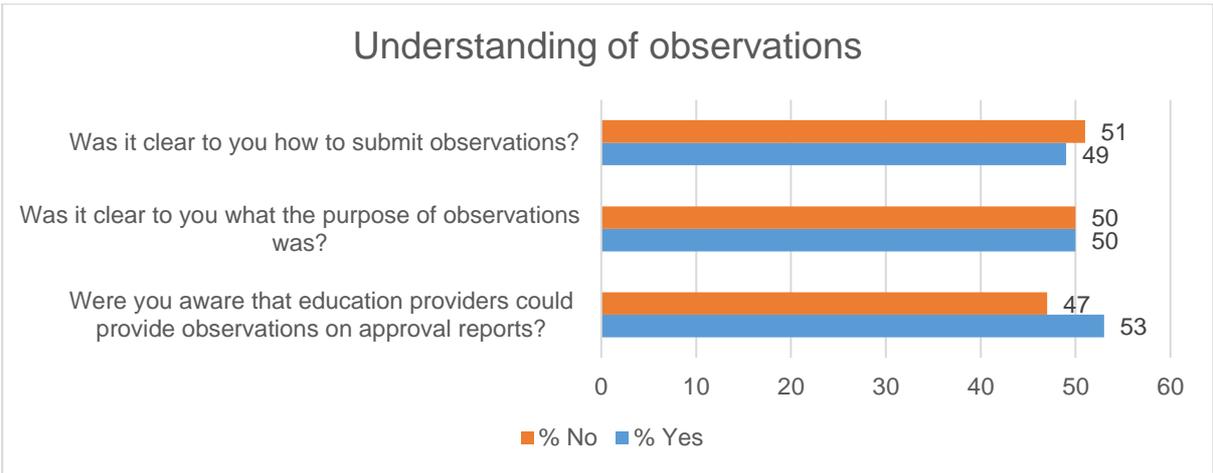
**Conditions and observations**

Regarding conditions, 83 per cent of respondents thought the conditions applied to their programmes were fair. The main concern raised in comments was that the HCPC panel had not understood information they had been given, the details of the programme, or were not applying the standards reasonably. Visitors not understanding information may not be a failing of the visitors. It up to education providers to inform the visitors how a programme meets our standards, and so the visitors not understanding information provided could also be a failing of education providers.

Although the results did not give us granular detail to be able to explore each situation, there may be a learning point for the Executive to ensure that reasoning is always clear so the education provider is able to understand why conditions have been set. This links back to **recommendation 1**.

If education providers have identified issues they have with the contents of their approval report, they are able to submit observations. Observations are the education provider’s opportunity to formally comment on outcomes of the approval process. They can provide observations about any part of the approval process, and the contents of the process report. Observations are considered by the ETC, along with the process report authored by the visitors. The ETC makes a decision considering the visitors’ recommendation(s) and the observations.

Around a fifth of respondents stated that they submitted observations. This figure could be anomalous, because in the two years to April 2018, observations were submitted in 7 per cent of approval cases. However, this could be explained by selection bias (it could be that respondents who submitted observations are more likely to respond to the survey), because different respondents from the same programme might be replying to this question, or possibly due to confusion between observations and the conditions response.



From the results, there is a significant gap in education providers’ understanding of observations. Two respondents expressed a concern that submitting observations might prejudice the approval process, or elicit a punitive response from the HCPC.

When we send reports to education providers, we attach a document that explains the purpose of observations, and how to make them. This document was most recently

reviewed and updated in December 2017. The updated document may make an impact on future feedback in this area.

***Recommendation 5:*** *Ensure education providers understand the purpose and nature of observations, the process for submitting them, and that submission of observations will not prejudice the outcome of the process.*

Although observations seem to be poorly understood, when education providers do submit them there is general satisfaction with the outcome. Nine out of ten respondents who submitted observations said that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the outcome.

### **Length of process**

Four out of five respondents said they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the overall length of the approval process. This is an area where satisfaction is lower than for many other areas. A central theme for the one fifth or people that responded negatively, was that the process was inflexible when dealing with a sector where change is often rapid. As with some of the comments in earlier questions, there was sometimes a lack of understanding of why the HCPC acts as it does; in particular some respondents were not clear why they were going through the approval process to consider changes to an approved programme, or why we require a documentary submission eight weeks before an approval visit.

We need time in the process to source and plan our resources, to allow education providers to respond to our requirements to a high standard, and to allow our visitors to interrogate the information submitted to us. We also ensure sufficient lead in time for the education provider to prepare and map their programme to our standards. Our timescales for visit lead in and documentary submissions are generally consistent with requirements in the higher education sector, and across many professional bodies that accredit programmes. However, we could do more to communicate the reasons for our requirements in this area.

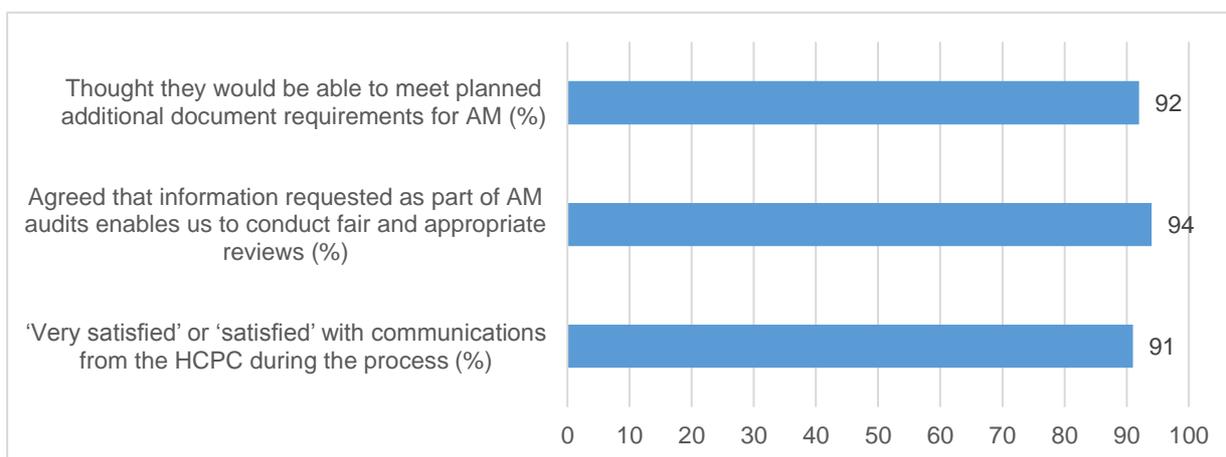
***Recommendation 6:*** *Through the process and in information on the website, communicate the reasons for required timeframes and the HCPC agenda requirements more clearly to education providers.*

## **Section 3: Annual monitoring**

Responses relating to the annual monitoring process were generally very positive. The first question in this chart relates to recent changes to broaden the evidence base required of education providers through the process<sup>2</sup> from the next academic year.

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<sup>2</sup> Discussed and agreed at the Education and Training Committee meeting in September 2017  
<http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10005527Enc04-Annualmonitoringproposalstobroadentheevidencebase.pdf>

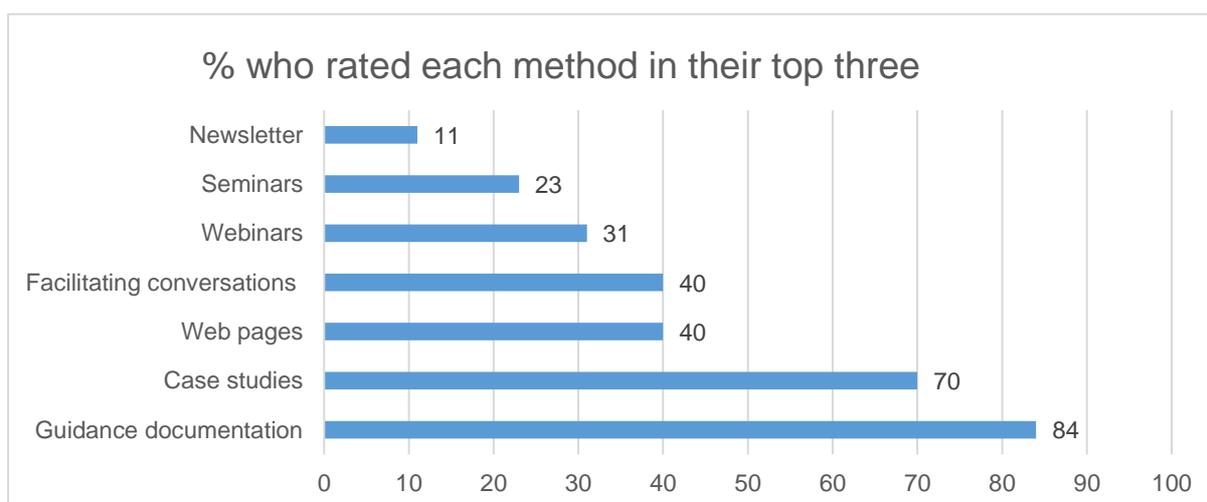


Although 92 per cent of responders thought they would be able to meet these requirements, there were some concerns about the extra documentation requirements adding to the annual monitoring workload. Several respondents thought that it would be excessive and unreasonable to require more documentation, while a number of others stressed the need for more and / or clearer guidance on what would be considered appropriate.

**Recommendation 7:** Consider a broad range of activities, to ensure we clearly communicate to education providers why we are changing the documentation requirements for the annual monitoring process, what these changes are, and how they can meet these requirements.

### Meeting the revised standards of education and training (SETs) through annual monitoring

From 2018-19, programmes going through annual monitoring will need to meet the revised SETs. We sought respondents' views on the best ways to help them understand how to do this, asking them to rank seven different ideas by how useful they thought they would be.



A specific guidance document and case studies were the clear preferences of education providers.

**Recommendation 8:** Consider education provider preferences for helping them understand how to meet the revised SETs through annual monitoring when creating guidance, and when planning communicating our requirements.

### Communicating annual monitoring requirements

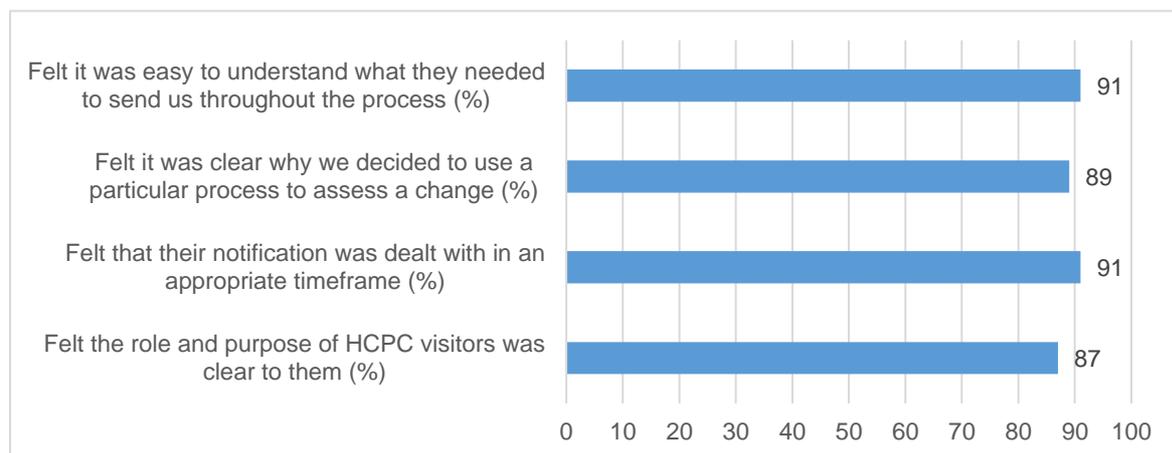
We asked respondents about the current arrangements for communicating annual monitoring requirements. We usually do this at or just before the start of the academic year, with a reminder one month before the education provider's specific submission due date, which is based on their internal quality monitoring date. 93 per cent of respondents said they thought this worked well. We gave those who said 'no' an opportunity to elaborate. The main suggestions were as follows:

- An intermediate notification between the September communication and the one month deadline / bringing forward of the reminder to two months before the submission deadline. This could be useful for those with due dates late in the academic year.
- Initial notification slightly further into the academic year, so that the notification is not lost in the rush at the start of the year.
- Notification before the start of the academic year to enable more effective planning.

**Recommendation 9:** Consider the feedback about communicating our requirements for annual monitoring when planning for the 2018-19 academic year.

## Section 4: The major change process

Around 30 per cent of the respondents had been through the major change process in 2015-16 or 2016-17. The responses were generally very positive. We have explored particular areas in more detail below.



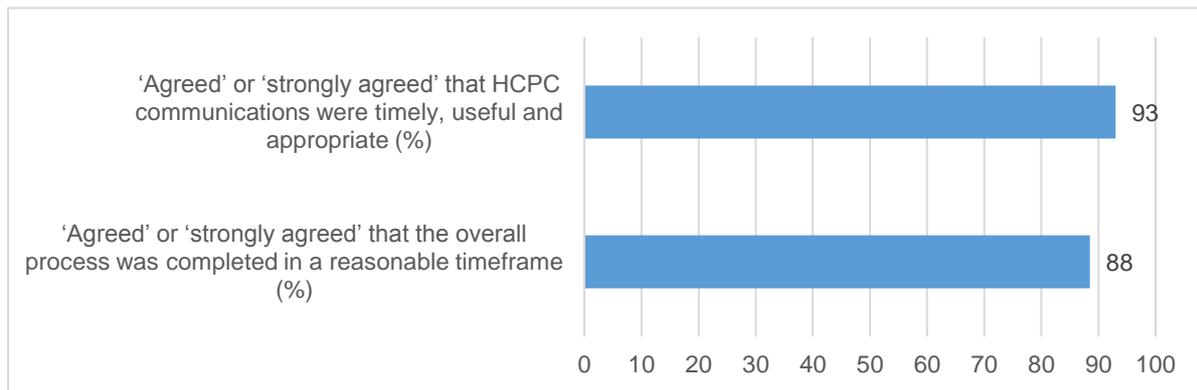
There is little to pick out in the responses to these questions, with around 90 per cent of respondents being supportive with the areas. In comments from those who disagreed with these statements, the main theme was about education providers not understanding what we had required of them, specifically:

- what information they had been asked to provide;
- why they had been asked to provide it; or
- why we had used a particular process to assess their change.

This feedback links back to **recommendation 1**.

## Length of process and communications

We asked other questions about the major change process.



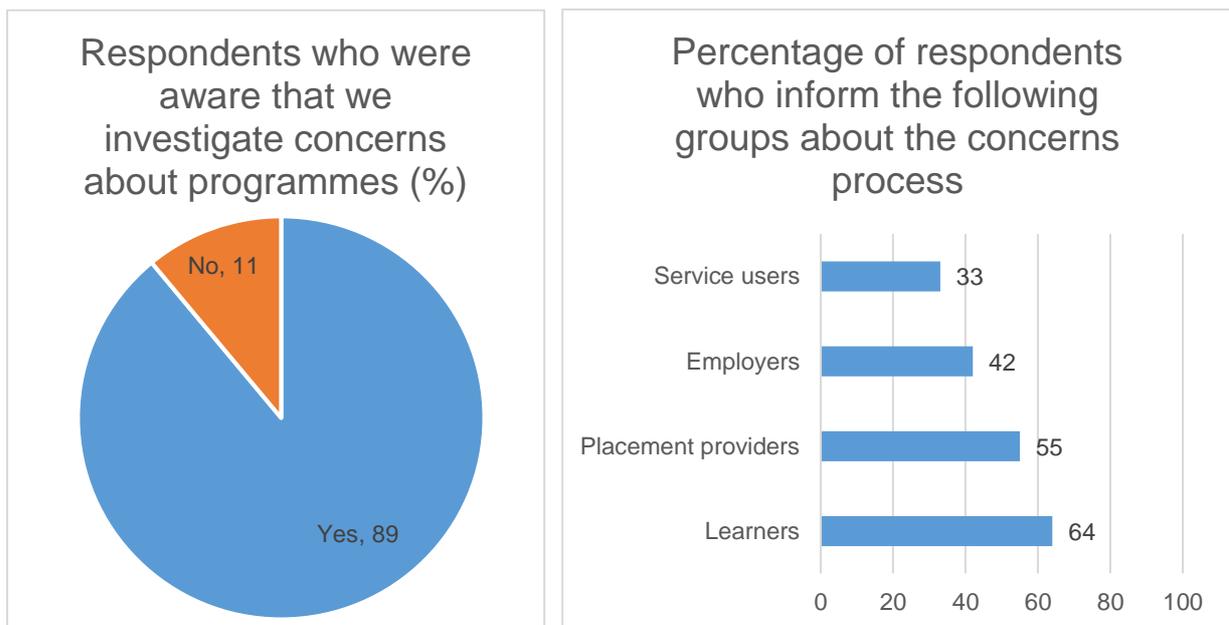
Of those who disagreed, several felt that the process was too long and involved. Others flagged communication issues, such as:

- clarity about who to contact at the HCPC;
- delays in responding to correspondence;
- uncertainty about what was required of them; and
- failure by the HCPC to include people flagged in correspondence (for example, quality assurance contacts as well as programme leaders)

**Recommendation 10:** Reconsider communications through the major change process, ensuring that key contacts are included, and decisions are well explained.

## Section 5: The programme concerns process

For the concerns process, we asked whether education providers were aware of the process, if they inform others of the process, and if so who they inform.



These levels seem low, especially given that 32 per cent of respondents said they did not inform any of these groups about the concerns process. This may reflect a need for clearer communication about our concerns process. Education providers were positive

about the need to inform their stakeholders of the process, with one suggesting that we provide a form of wording for them to use when doing this.

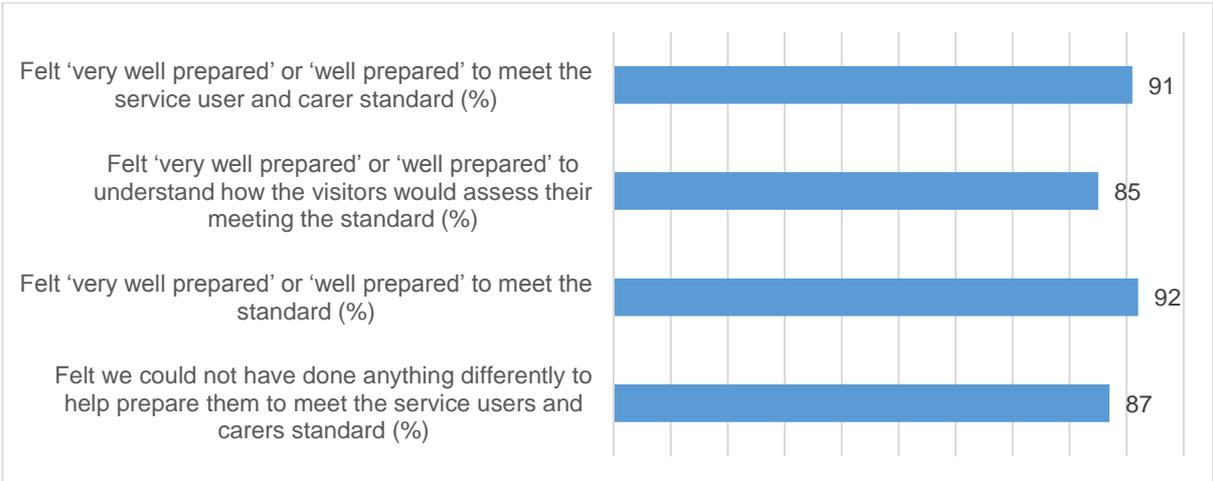
82 per cent of respondents said they knew where to find information about the concerns process, and that the currently available information is clear. Those who answered 'no' were either not aware of the process, had not been told where to find the information, or had not had reason to look for it.

We are currently undertaking a review of the concerns process, specifically to ensure it is well defined, fit for purpose, and that we ensure information is accessible to those that may need it.

**Recommendation 11:** Consider feedback about the concern process when undertaking the concern review.

### Section 6: The service user and carer standard

We required all approved programmes to meet our standard requiring service user and carer involvement for the first time in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 academic years. We asked these education providers about their experience of meeting this standard.



The feedback was generally very positive in this area. We will undertake a deeper analysis of this data, and of the outcomes from operational processes in relation to this standard (for example, conditions set), in the future.

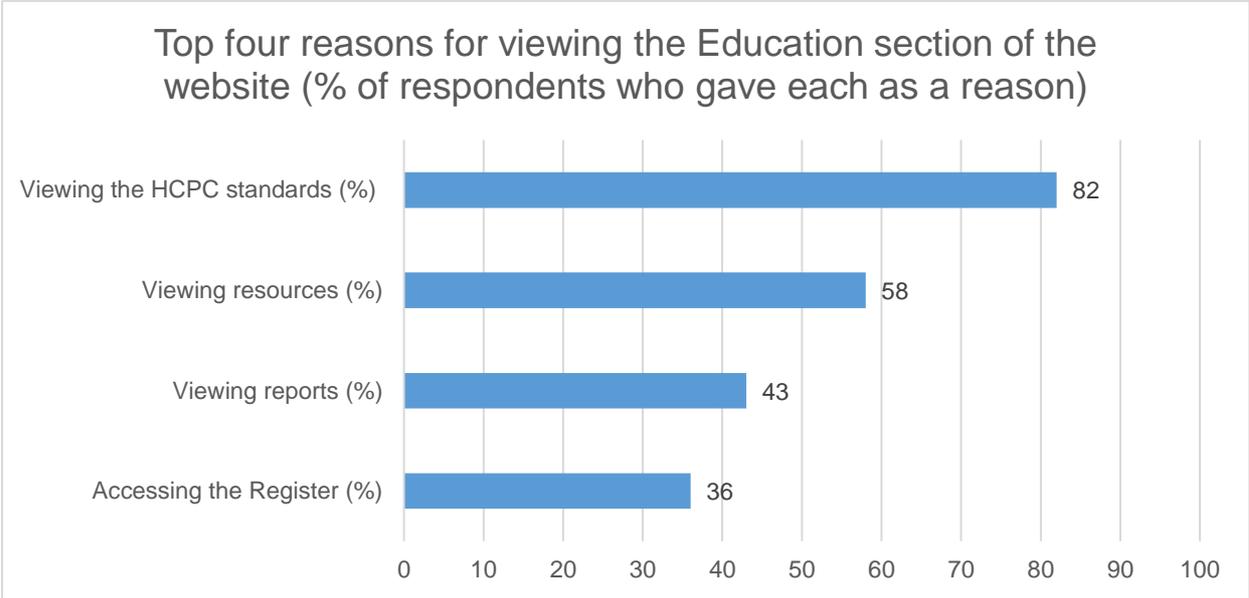
### Section 7: Communication activities

#### Education Update

Education update is sent to all education stakeholders on a quarterly basis. It communicates key regulatory requirements, and information that may impact on the sector. Of those that responded to this area, 93 per cent said that Education Update was 'very useful' or 'fairly useful'. Around three out of five respondents said they routinely forward Education Update to learners, academic colleagues in their own and other programmes, and practice educators.

Only 12 per cent of respondents said they did not read Education Update. Half said they read it in the week after they received it, and 33 per cent in the following month. This suggests that the publication is well received and liked, and is used beyond when it is initially received by education provider contacts.

**The website**



Other reasons given included viewing guidance, checking a person’s registration details, checking ETC dates, finding document templates and informing curriculum content. Seven per cent of respondents said they did not visit the Education section of the website.

Generally, respondents were happy with the website, with 96 per cent of respondents saying that they were ‘Very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’.

**Resources available**

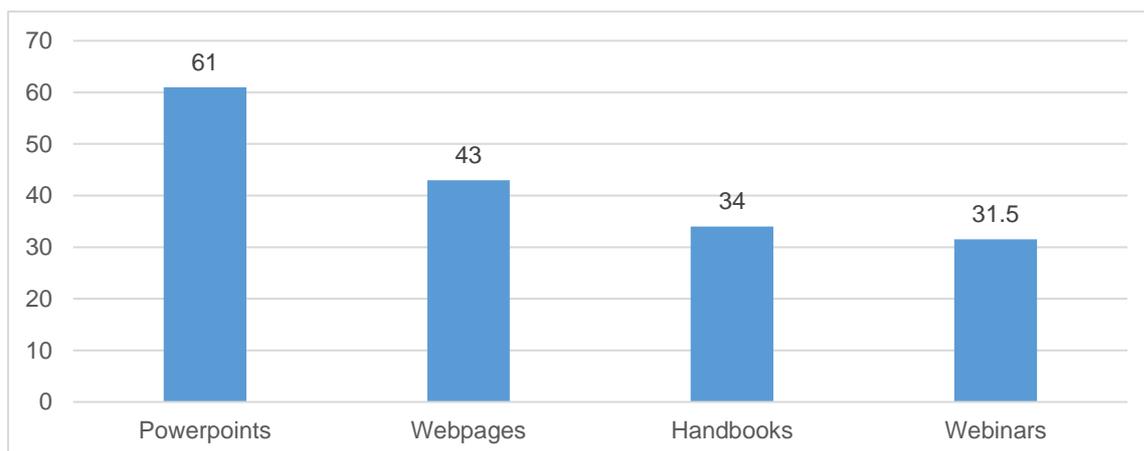
We produce resources to assist education provider in meeting our regulatory requirements. We asked a specific question about whether education provider were aware of the animated learning resources for learners<sup>3</sup>, and 46 per cent of respondents said that they were.

**Recommendation 12:** *Ensure that education providers are aware of all resources available on the website, especially learning resources.*

Four out of five respondents said that they would appreciate more resources to help them deliver content about the HCPC to learners. We asked those respondents what form they would prefer that material to take.

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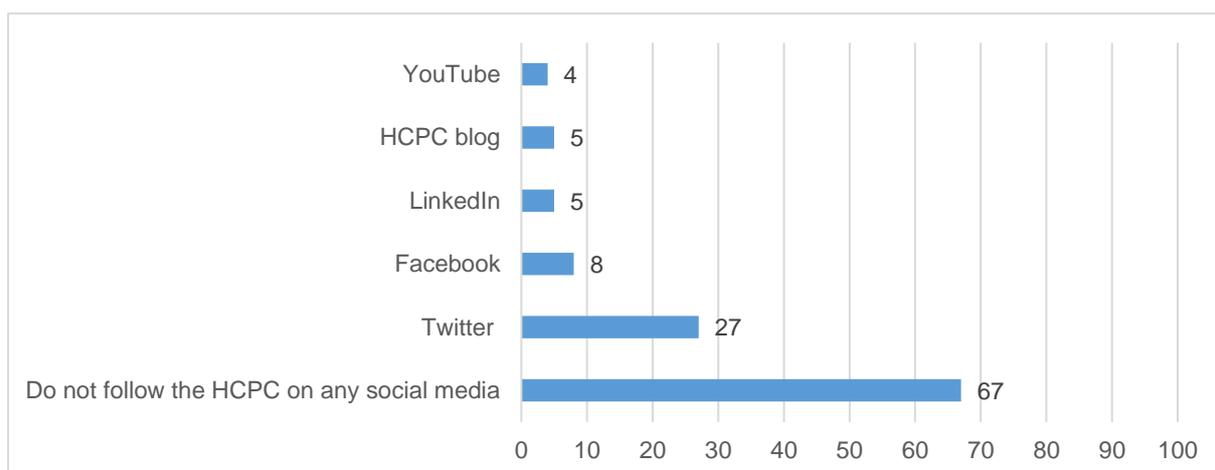
<sup>3</sup> [This resource](#) was created to help learners contextualise the Guidance on conduct and ethics for students.



**Recommendation 13:** Review what resources we make available to help education providers deliver HCPC-related content.

### Social media

The Education Department does not have bespoke social media presence. Rather, Education news is communicated via the organisation social media channels, on the website, and via Education Update. Around two thirds of respondents do not follow the HCPC on any social media platforms.



**Recommendation 14:** Consider broadening the appeal of social media channels to education provider contacts.

### Conclusion

The majority of feedback gathered from education providers through this process has been positive. Many of the responses demonstrate that we have a good relationship with our stakeholders, and they understand what we require of them.

There are some areas of improvement required, which the Department will work on over the coming months. Particularly, we will look to:

- more clearly communicate our requirements, including reasons for undertaking particular assessments;

- pilot an electronic only documentary submission for annual monitoring in 2018-19;
- develop education provider understanding of observations in the approval process; and
- develop the concern process in line with stakeholder feedback, with specific focus on communicating the process more widely.

The survey was not just an opportunity to see what we are doing well, and what we could improve upon, but was also useful to see how education providers would like us to help them through our changing regulatory requirements. Through this process, we have gathered useful feedback for communicating our requirements for annual monitoring in 2018-19, and in which format guidance would be most helpful to education providers.

We intend to continue to seek and act on feedback from education providers, both on an ad hoc basis, and future surveys.

## Appendix 1: Collated recommendations

### Our regulatory approach

- **Recommendation 1:** Strengthen the communication of reasons for decision-making, including why we choose to use particular processes to review changes to programmes, and when setting conditions.
- **Recommendation 2:** Consider comments about inconsistency with visitors' approach to assessment when developing the next round of visitor training.
- **Recommendation 3:** Continue to ensure visitors' deliberations and questioning is guided appropriately by executives, so we apply standards consistently.
- **Recommendation 4:** Revisit the feasibility of all-electronic documentary submissions for all processes, following analysis of the activity for annual monitoring in 2018-19.

### The approval process

- **Recommendation 5:** Ensure education providers understand the purpose and nature of observations, the process for submitting them, and that submission of observations will not prejudice the outcome of the process.
- **Recommendation 6:** Through the process and in information on the website, communicate the reasons for required timeframes and the HCPC agenda requirements more clearly to education providers.

### Annual monitoring

- **Recommendation 7:** Consider a broad range of activities, to ensure we clearly communicate to education providers why we are changing the documentation requirements for the annual monitoring process, what these changes are, and how they can meet these requirements.
- **Recommendation 8:** Consider education provider preferences for helping them understand how to meet the revised SETs through annual monitoring when creating guidance, and when planning communicating our requirements.
- **Recommendation 9:** Consider the feedback about communicating our requirements for annual monitoring when planning for the 2018-19 academic year.

### The major change process

- **Recommendation 10:** Reconsider communications through the major change process, ensuring that key contacts are included, and decisions are well explained.

### The programme concerns process

- **Recommendation 11:** Consider feedback about the concern process when undertaking the concern review.

### Communication activities

- **Recommendation 12:** Ensure that education providers are aware of all resources available on the website, especially learning resources.
- **Recommendation 13:** Review what resources we make available to help education providers deliver HCPC-related content.
- **Recommendation 14:** Consider broadening the appeal of social media channels to education provider contacts.