

Briefing sheet for the General Social Care Council for England

The GSCC began a review of its regulatory methodology in 2008 as part of modernising its approval and inspection processes. After being informed by research it carried out on regulatory models, it developed a new risk based approach to its annual monitoring of approved programmes. Such an approach was more targeted and proportionate to risk. This means that the GSCC will focus its efforts much more on those programmes where there is evidence of risk in meeting the requirements, enabling those other programmes to manage with greater autonomy and less GSCC intervention.

The government's Social Work Taskforce Report published in December 2009 welcomed the approach the GSCC was taking to strengthening regulation. Since then the GSCC has been working closely with the Social Work Reform Board implementation group on education. The GSCC aims to provide better rather than more regulation. This means a number of changes in the way we work.

We have developed new regulatory standards which we are currently piloting. These standards define the way we go about assessing quality to specified criteria, linked to risk and evidence. This will enable an inspector to follow standard criteria for the first time in monitoring compliance to the education standards. Inspectors' judgements in monitoring quality will be more transparent and consistent as a result of the new regulatory standards. These standards are based on the international standard (ISO 31000:2009). We believe it is important to base our regulatory decisions on evidence judged by the new criteria of these standards to satisfy external challenge of our decisions.

From April this year we will publish all annual monitoring reports on our website. All reports will be shared in advance with the institution to agree accuracy although the judgement is solely the responsibility of the GSCC. We have confirmed this to government as part of making regulation more transparent. Using the new standards, together with publication of annual monitoring reports, will give the public greater access to information across the country on the quality of programmes. It will enable the public to make comparisons for the first time of approved programmes.

With the change in the QAA's approach from a subject scrutiny role to one of institutional review the professional regulator's role is now even more important than at any other time. There has been a shift from independent audit of programmes to self-audit by the programme itself. The role of the external examiner is crucial in this process. The GSCC will rely upon and scrutinise even more the external examiner's reports as an essential part of the quality audit of programmes.