



**BIOS** | BRITISH AND IRISH  
ORTHOPTIC SOCIETY

# Consultation on the revised Guidance on Health and Character

## Response from the British and Irish Orthoptic Society to the Health and Care Professions Council

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The British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS) is the professional body for orthoptists and was founded in 1937. It is also a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. BIOS is affiliated to the Allied Health Professionals Federation, a group made up of 12 bodies representing more than 158,000 workers in the UK. BIOS is also a member of the International Orthoptic Association and OCE. BIOS members in the UK are also automatically trade union members of the British Orthoptic Society Trade Union (BOSTU).

We are in favour of the changes proposed by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) to their Guidance on Health and Character. We feel they will provide greater clarity and consistency for our members around making self-referrals and expectations during this process.

### Aligning the criteria for character declarations (Q1&2)

We support the proposal to align the criteria for character declaration to be the same as those in the existing standards, and that these are the same for applicants and registrants. This greater consistency should make it easier to understand for our members. The removal of the need for applicants to disclose civil cases brought against them is proportionate and, again, will ensure consistency for applicants.

### Clarity of Guidance on Health and Character Declarations (Q3,4,5,6)

The Guidance is sufficiently clear on when applicants should make a declaration relating to their health or character. In particular, the emphasis on declarations only needing to be made when this is likely to affect an applicant's ability to practise is made clearly, which should prevent unnecessary stress for our members.

The advice that an applicant or registrant should contact their trade union or professional body before making a declaration or if they are unclear is positive and should also be included in the webpage linking to the guidance.

## **Merger of Guidance and Policy (Q7)**

The merger of the Policy and Guidance is sensible and will ensure greater clarity in the process for applicants and existing registrants.

## **Case Studies (Q10)**

The case studies are a helpful addition and provide greater clarity relating to slightly more complex cases. If extra detail is added, it should be ensured that this does not make the case studies seem overly complex or cloud the point being made.

## **Equality and Diversity implications (Q10)**

We do not see the potential for any unintended consequences for groups or individuals with one of the mentioned protected characteristics or for those who are more likely to have a criminal conviction. Indeed, the greater clarity and case studies should lead to less likelihood of unnecessary declarations, which should reduce the chances of unintended consequences.

The HCPC should, in both cases, continue to review the impact of these changes with this in mind. We note the intended increase in the use of data on registrants planned by the HCPC, which is positive and should help to identify any unforeseen issues.