



BIOS | BRITISH AND IRISH
ORTHOPTIC SOCIETY

Consultation on changes to fees

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

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).

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the rationale we have set out for increasing our fees by the minimum necessary amount?

We understand the need for the HCPC to cover their costs and remain financially sustainable, in order that they are able to fulfil their key role. However this needs to be balanced against the current context faced by our members: orthoptists' wages have not increased by same proportion and many have struggled significantly though the cost-of-living crisis. Any increase places further pressure on AHPs and risks undermining efforts to improve recruitment and retention of staff to key roles within the NHS.

2. Given the rationale, to what extent do you support the fee increase proposal?

Any increase in fees must be accompanied by improvements in service. If our members are to be paying more, it is reasonable for them to expect an efficient and consistent level of service. Over the past few years there have been a number of ongoing issues with HCPC processes, that have had a significant impact on our members, including extremely poor communication with registrants, with long waits on the phone and a failure to respond to emails, as well as considerable delays in renewals being confirmed. More recently, there have been significant delays in the registration of overseas applicants. We note that the HCPC is working to improve their processes, and their success will be key to our members likely reaction to the increase in fees.

3. In addition to the equality impacts set out in the Equality Impact Assessment, can you identify any further impacts relating to protected characteristics that we should consider?

Any increase in the cost of registration has a disproportionate affect on those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are more likely to see this as a barrier to entry to the profession. More specifically, this will have a much greater impact on those working part-time, which disproportionately impacts the female workforce.