



Policy and Education Committee

6 October 2022

Boundaries communications plans and activities

Classification	Public
Purpose	For noting
Issue	To update the Committee on our communication plan, work undertaken and planned, and success measures in relation to boundaries related issues.
Recommendation	To note the progress on the implementation of our work on promoting and maintaining safe professional boundaries.
Financial and resourcing implications	Costs of activities undertaken and planned will be from planned budgets.
Equality and diversity implications	Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues continue to be considered in relation to communications strategies and accessibility of resources and events. For example, in the preparation of case scenarios, consideration is given to the characteristics of those included. Also we aim to deliver messages in a range of formats to assist with reach and accessibility issues. Further EDI implications relate to patient and practitioner characteristics in boundaries cases, which are not explored in this paper.
Communications implications	Communication activities in relation to boundaries are included in the paper.
Annex	None.
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Key messages

- This paper outlines our boundaries communication project plan, with an overview of activities undertaken and planned, to raise awareness of and support professional practice and decision making in this area.
- The latest NCOR analysis of concerns and complaints data indicates numbers of concerns and complaints around communicating inappropriately were slightly more than average and around sexual impropriety are close to the 8-year average, this is despite the overall number of complaints being low. These figures are therefore proportionally slightly higher than would be expected. There were no concerns and complaints raised about consent.
- We have a boundaries communications project plan which has aims including raising awareness, helping osteopaths and education providers understand the issues and to help demonstrate the need for the use of professional judgement (and to provide support to navigate the challenges that come with professional judgement and decision making).
- This paper provides an update on activities undertaken and planned in this area.

Background

1. The Boundaries research undertaken by Julie Stone was agreed for publication by Council and was [published with a news story](#) on 3 August 2022.
2. This paper updates the Committee on plans to disseminate and promote this work, and to continue to support osteopaths in implementing the [Osteopathic Practice Standards](#) effectively in relation to boundaries issues.

Discussion

Boundaries Communications Project

3. As was [reported to the Committee in March 2022](#), we have been implementing a boundaries communications project for some months, with a variety of activities and resources. To recap, the aims underpinning the project are:
 - To raise awareness of boundaries as an issue and to ensure osteopaths understand that many situations are complex.
 - For osteopaths to understand the impact these issues can potentially have on patients and the harm they can cause to patients.
 - For osteopaths to understand that they need to exercise their professional judgement and to seek advice and/or the views of colleagues and peers where this would be helpful. We also want to ensure awareness of the changing societal context.

- To reduce the numbers and proportion of concerns and complaints in this area (but we are aware that this might take time to see results).
 - To raise awareness and understanding of the issues with the education providers so they can help students and future osteopaths handle these situations appropriately.
 - To ensure that patients understand how to raise a concern if things go wrong and what to expect as part of this process.
4. As Committee members will be aware, we ran a series of monthly boundaries case scenarios and responses to these over the last half of 2021. Feedback on these and engagement was positive. Over the past few months we have been running sessions on professional judgement within the iO Roadshows, in Birmingham, Leeds and Glasgow. These include a series of ethical scenarios for participants to discuss in groups. Several of these include boundaries issues. The sessions have been well received, and feedback has been good. We have further sessions in Cardiff and Heathrow planned for October. We will probably have reached about 200 osteopaths with these sessions, and will then look to widen the impact across the profession by publishing the scenarios for osteopaths to consider.
 5. A key focus of recent activity has been publishing the Julie Stone research, and the communications around this. We met with Julie Stone following publication on 10 August to discuss further plans to promote this study and its findings, and to continue the momentum of raising the profession's awareness of boundaries issues and addressing these. We are also working on developing a clearer picture of what areas might be of most relevance to each of our stakeholders and so which areas they may wish to take forward with regard to discussions of the report's findings.
 6. Plans for the coming months to promote the Julie Stone research include:
 - Dissemination event (for key stakeholders across the sector and beyond). Timings being discussed to account for availability
 - Boundaries webinar aimed at educators as part of our planned series of Quality Assurance workshops
 - We are scoping out a plan to develop a series of podcasts to support the OPS, including an interview with Julie Stone
 - The next annual round of presentations to new osteopathy students will be commencing at the end of September, and these include an introduction to professionalism/boundaries.
 - In discussions about a seminar with the Professional Standards Authority
 7. In addition, University College of Osteopathy (UCO) has secured funding for a project to develop resources and support in relation to boundaries issues, and is working with Julie Stone on this. We have confirmed our support and

engagement with this. So far, they have run some sessions for regional groups, and for osteopathic educators. We understand that they are planning to develop resources aimed at supporting practitioners, and educators, including some e-learning modules around boundaries issues. To a large extent, this intends to implement some of the recommendations and address some of the issues raised in Julie Stone's research.

8. The latest NCOR concerns and complaints analysis is reported to the Committee separately (see Public Item 8). Key findings include:
 - Reduced number of concerns overall (compared to 7-year average).
 - There were no concerns and complaints raised about consent.
 - There were slightly more than average complaints about communicating inappropriately (Figure 8a) and numbers of concerns and complaints around sexual impropriety are around the 8-year average. Both of these figures are despite the overall number of complaints being low. This indicates proportionally these figures are higher than might have been expected.
 - Professionalism and Safety and Quality in Practice are the dominant themes in relation to concerns.
9. In terms of numbers, in relation to boundaries:
 Sexual impropriety (8-year mean 12.5 concerns, 2021 n=12)
 Communicating inappropriately (8-year mean 12 concerns, 2021 n=15).
10. Whilst these numbers represent only some 0.5% of the Register, the impact of breaches of boundaries can be considerable for patients and for practitioners. We are committed to supporting osteopaths in managing boundaries issues appropriately for the protection of patients.

Recommendation: To note the progress on the implementation of our work on promoting and maintaining safe professional boundaries