

**Council**  
**10 October 2012**  
**Registrants' Opinion Survey 2012**

<b><u>Classification</u></b>	Public
<b><u>Purpose</u></b>	For discussion
<b><u>Issue</u></b>	This paper sets out a proposed course of action following the conclusion of the 2012 survey of registrants, including the developing of a new communications strategy.
<b><u>Recommendations</u></b>	To consider the content of the report.
<b><u>Financial and resourcing implications</u></b>	Action arising as a result of the survey will be accounted for in budget and business planning for 2013-14 if this falls outside of the current year's resources.
<b><u>Equality and diversity implications</u></b>	None arising directly from this paper, although in making any major changes to our communications, equality and diversity matters will need to be considered.
<b><u>Communications implications</u></b>	The survey findings have implications for the GOsC's communications and engagement with registrants and will inform revisions to our strategy. We propose to publish the findings and our accompanying commentary as these are potentially of interest and importance to osteopaths and other stakeholder organisations.
<b><u>Annexes</u></b>	Annex A – GOsC commentary on the findings Annex B – Survey data
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## Background

1. A key strategic objective of the current GOsC Communications and Engagement Strategy is to 'ensure registrants understand, value and have confidence in regulation and the GOsC, and that our communications reflect their needs as osteopaths' (Strategic Objective 1). Achieving this includes action to 'Survey registrants to identify knowledge gaps and understanding of the purpose of regulation and the GOsC, and understand from them how we can communicate more effectively'.
2. The GOsC commissioned the independent agency Opinion Matters to survey all osteopaths on the UK Register between 26 March and 30 April 2012. Responses were received from 1,372 osteopaths out of a total GOsC registrant population at that time of 4,586.

## Discussion

### ***Action arising from the 2012 Survey***

#### *Publication*

3. The high response rate generated by the 2012 Survey – the equivalent of 30% of the GOsC's registrants, and a strong demographic correlation with the UK Register, suggests the findings of the 2012 Osteopath Survey represent a reliable sample of current registrant opinion. As such, the results not only have important implications for the GOsC, informing our policy development and our strategies for communicating and engaging effectively with registrants, but are potentially significant also for other key osteopathic organisations responsible for the leadership and development of the profession.
4. Considering these findings in conjunction also with osteopath opinion gathered in the course of recent GOsC engagement with registrants to explore new osteopathic standards, revalidation, and priorities for developing the profession, the GOsC has produced a commentary on the findings of the survey and likely implications. It is proposed, in the interests of transparency and cooperation, that the full survey findings and the GOsC commentary (Annexes A and B) should be published on the GOsC public website and readily accessible to all stakeholders.

#### *Stakeholder collaboration*

5. In addition to identifying areas for GOsC action in response to registrant feedback, our commentary has identified areas of professional development that might be led, more effectively, by osteopathic organisations other than the GOsC, including the British Osteopathic Association, the Osteopathic Alliance, the National Council for Osteopathic Research, the Council of Osteopathic Education Institutions and individual education institutions, and regional osteopathic groups. To support and facilitate such development, it is proposed the GOsC

should seek opportunities to actively share and discuss in detail the findings and their implications with our partner organisations with a view to enhancing the quality and integrity of osteopathic practice and ensuring patient safety. This will include circulating the findings to those organisations attending the development meeting on 7 November.

*Informing the 2013-16 Corporate Plan*

6. In response to survey feedback, some action is being taken immediately to remedy problems of which we are already aware and confirmed by survey feedback. These include improvements to the language and tone of GOsC communications and to website navigation and online service facilities. Longer-term engagement strategies and collaborative initiatives aimed at developing the quality and safety of osteopathic practice will be reflected in the 2013-16 Corporate Plan, and annual Business Plans, to be approved by Council.

*Revising the GOsC Communications and Engagement Plan*

7. Drawing on the findings of the 2012 registrant survey, and patient research and focus group feedback, we shall develop a revised GOsC Communications and Engagement Plan for Council approval in March 2013.
8. We anticipate that key issues to be addressed or taken into account in a revised plan will include:

*Understanding of and confidence in osteopathic regulation*

- a. Redefining and clearer articulation of the GOsC purpose, in relation to other osteopathic organisations.
- b. Reinforcement of registrant awareness and understanding of public expectations and the modern healthcare environment and regulatory framework. Work to convey more effectively to osteopaths the benefits of regulation in terms of public confidence.
- c. Encouraging and equipping osteopaths to promote public awareness of the Register and the standards of practice (including the development of a new Certification Mark), to enhance patient confidence.
- d. Renewed action to promote, within the healthcare community, improved inter-professional awareness of osteopathic regulation and standards.
- e. Testing of current public and patient awareness of and confidence in osteopathic regulation. Renewed action to promote public and patient awareness of the GOsC, the Register, and osteopathic practice standards.
- f. Improved mechanisms for ensuring adequate and appropriate feedback to osteopaths (and others) who report to us incidences of illegal practice.
- g. Communication strategies to improve registrant understanding of the GOsC complaints management processes and to increase confidence in the fitness to practise procedures. Implementing more effective means of engaging

registrants in sharing and learning lessons from the concerns raised by patients and others, with emphasis on why we take the action we do, rather than on the nature of the process.

- h. Retesting of registrant knowledge and confidence, in due course.

#### *Reporting concerns*

- i. Working with osteopaths, educators and the professional association, we will prioritise initiatives that encourage all osteopaths to take action when they have reason to be concerned about the conduct or quality of care provided by a healthcare colleague, including improved support and guidance. Explore and address obstacles to reporting concerns.

#### *Customer service*

- j. We have already developed and are implementing new customer service standards to ensure we deal with registrant and public contact and concerns quickly and efficiently, and to a consistently high standard, which can be measured and monitored. This will be underpinned by staff training. Service standards will be published on the GOsC websites and kept under review.
- k. We will seek to implement efficiencies and cost-effectiveness in our online registrant services, notably the CPD and registration renewal processes, to increase usage, improve the user experience, and ensure the provision of essential information and guidance. We will develop additional mechanisms for registrants to highlight difficulties they experience with our registration renewal processes. We will aim to drive up the proportion of registrants renewing their registration online (currently c.30%) to levels equivalent to that of registrant online CPD activity (c.80%), through improvements to the user interface.
- l. The baseline data generated by the 2012 Survey represents a benchmark for measuring improvement over time.

#### *Communicating with osteopaths*

- m. Effective communication will be ensured by continued development and application of a wide range of technologies and media to improve our reach into the profession, maximising choice and accessibility.
- n. Based on feedback, we are actively seeking to adjust language, tone, content and design of our communications to better meet the needs of our registrant audience.
- o. We are prioritising improvements to navigation, 'searchability', and 'interactiveness' of the GOsC websites.

#### *Consultation*

- p. We will strive for increased clarity with regard to the aims and purpose of our consultation activity.

- q. We will ensure a continued commitment to publishing consultation feedback in full and explaining how and where feedback has shaped policy development.
- r. As far as it is feasible, we will seek to employ a wide range of consultation methods and media.

*Engaging with registrants and regional networking*

- s. We will continue to actively support the establishment by osteopaths of local and regional peer networks, and we will continue to seek face-to-face engagement with registrants through these groups. We will work collaboratively with osteopathic organisations – the British Osteopathic Association, the Osteopathic Alliance, the National Council for Osteopathic Research, the Council of Osteopathic Education Institutions, in conjunction with the Regional Communications Network, to achieve a cohesive, productive regional infrastructure. We will work with these organisations also to ensure the inclusion of all sectors in local peer support groups, for example newly-qualified osteopaths.
- t. We will actively seek increased use of emerging technologies (web-conferencing, Skype, etc) to promote direct engagement and peer networking, to minimise practitioner isolation.

***Evaluation***

- 9. The findings of the 2012 Osteopaths' Opinion Survey represent baseline data against which the GOsC can compare our performance, and registrant behaviour and attitudes, with that of other regulated health professions. From what we know anecdotally, with regard to registrant confidence in the regulation provided by the GOsC, this would appear to be high relative to other health practices, and the GOsC will want to monitor, maintain and work to increase this confidence. We will wish in the near future also to compare this with a test of public and patient confidence in osteopathic regulation.
- 10. We will, therefore, plan to reassess in due course progress and improvement arising from actions taken as a result of the 2012 Osteopaths' Opinion Survey findings.

**Recommendation:** to consider the content of the report.