

2015 Annual Review

The General Chiropractic Council in 2015

The Role of the General Chiropractic Council

The General Chiropractic Council was established by Parliament – and remains accountable to it – to protect chiropractic patients and the public across the UK.

How do we do this?

- [We set the standards](#) that all chiropractors in the UK are required to follow. These standards ensure that patients can be confident that they will receive safe treatment from a highly qualified professional.
- [We maintain a register](#) of chiropractors who meet our registration requirements. It is illegal for someone to practise as a chiropractor if they are not on our register.
- [We ensure that chiropractic degree courses are of a high quality](#) producing graduates that have the level of skills to provide safe and effective treatment.
- [We take action](#) against chiropractors who do not meet the standards and put the safety of patients at risk.

2015 was a busy year for the Council – this document highlights some of the key things we did, and their impact on chiropractors and patients.

Continuing to Raise Standards

When we asked chiropractors and patients if they felt that the standards that chiropractors have to meet should be revised, we received a resounding **YES**, with both groups saying that the existing requirements failed to reflect the way that chiropractic is now practised, that they were difficult to understand and that having the Code and Standards in different documents was confusing.

So we set about working with patients and chiropractors to develop a new set of standards. The new standards, called The Code, were published in June 2015, and [put meeting patient needs at the heart of chiropractic practice](#).

Conscious of the need for further guidance to help chiropractors, [we have published six new guidance papers](#). The guidance helps chiropractors and patients to understand the Code's requirements.

Test of Competence (TOC)

It is vital that chiropractors coming to the UK from outside the EU meet the high standards that we set in the UK. To ensure that this remains the case, we introduced a [new Test of Competence \(TOC\)](#) that chiropractors wishing to practise in the UK - but with an overseas qualification - must pass before they can register with us. The TOC ensures that they understand how the Code impacts on chiropractic practise in the UK, and that chiropractors coming into the country recognise and address any differences in how treatment was provided in their country compared to the UK.

The Guidance	
-	Maintaining sexual boundaries
-	Consent
-	Candour
-	Confidentiality
-	The use of social media
-	Advertising

"Taking the TOC has been a great experience – it has really given me confidence that I am now competent to treat patients in the UK" - A TOC candidate

Despite the challenging nature of the Test, [over 80%](#) of applicants passed. With the UK becoming an increasingly attractive place for chiropractors to practise, we also recruited more TOC assessors, which will allow more candidates to take the TOC in 2016.

Chiropractic Education

Students studying chiropractic must learn the skills and knowledge required to be able to practise safely and deliver a high quality of treatment to patients.

To ensure that this remains the case, chiropractic courses that are offered by UK institutions must meet our requirements. In 2015 [we gave the Anglo European College of Chiropractic approval](#) to offer their new Master of Chiropractic programme for five years until August 2020.

We also meet with the three colleges providing chiropractic courses each year to discuss issues arising from their annual monitoring returns and to confirm that they continue to meet our requirements. We also discussed items of mutual interest such as support for students, future plans, involving patients in teaching and learning and inter-disciplinary learning with them to exchange ideas and promote best practise around the sector.

“I had to work very hard to earn my qualification and feel (chiropractic education) should be regulated to make sure we all maintain the same high standard.” – Recent graduate

We also [launched a research project](#) to allow us – and the educational institutions – to identify any lapses of professional behaviour in students, and enable them to compare their views on lapses with those of their course colleagues and both chiropractic and medical students in general.

We expect chiropractors to continue learning throughout their careers, and carry out a minimum of 30 hours continuing professional development (CPD) each year. Not only did we produce guidance for chiropractors to help them meet our CPD requirements, but we also [started a project to work with chiropractors to both develop new guidance on the CPD scheme](#) and to develop the elements of a new CPD scheme that will assure continuing fitness to practise.

Protecting Patients

The vast majority of chiropractors provide their patients with high quality, safe care.

But an important part of our work is investigating chiropractors when concerns are raised about their performance, and where necessary taking action.

In 2015 there were [sanctions against nine chiropractors](#). Of the nine, one was removed from the register, one was subjected to a conditions of practice order, and another was suspended. The rest received admonishments, while one chiropractor was subject to an interim suspension to protect the public while the allegations against him were investigated further.

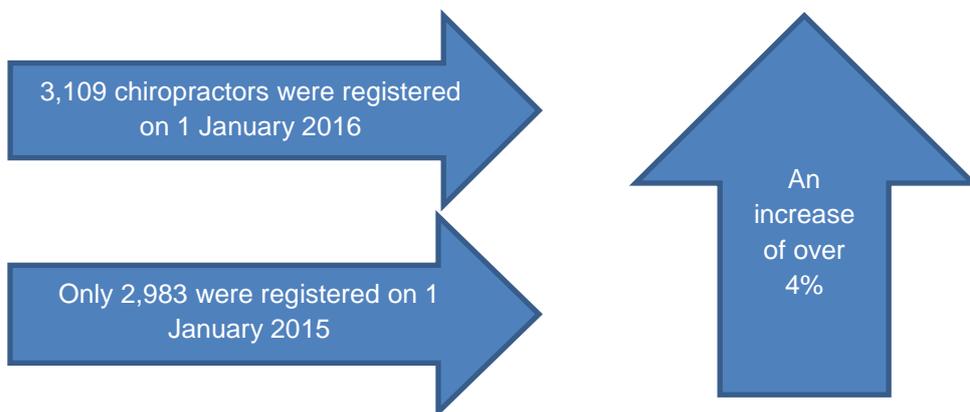
At the end of 2015, 36 chiropractors were waiting for their cases to be heard.

Ideally though, chiropractors should not be making mistakes that lead to complaints. Over the year we have sought to [provide registrants with information and guidance](#) to avoid the mistakes that are leading to complaints.

We have also sought to refine our processes. We now have just one lawyer managing each complaint, rather than several as before. This has seen us drastically reducing the time taken to handle complaints, meaning that we are now the second fastest of all health regulators despite the burdensome procedures required by our legislation.

The role played by witnesses in hearings is vital, and we have sought to ensure that they receive the support they need. We now provide them with information before hearings so they understand their role and what will happen at the hearing, and also introduced new procedures to protect vulnerable witnesses.

A growing profession



The chiropractic profession continues to grow. Over 2015 the number of registrants [increased by 126 to 3,109](#), representing an [increase in registrants of 4%](#) since 2014, and of 24% since 2009.

During 2015 we implemented new requirements for registrants to have £5 million of indemnity insurance cover – this represents an increase in cover of £3million to previous requirements, and ensures that patients can be confident that their chiropractor can meet any claims against them.

“Registration adds to my credibility as a primary care health provider” – Recent graduate

We also [maintained our registration fee](#) at £800. This is testament to the efficiencies we have introduced, which have allowed us to keep the fee unchanged since 2012.

The need for change

2015 saw us continuing to successfully carry out our mission of protecting the public. Indeed, our regulator, the Professional Standards Authority commented in our Performance Review that our processes and procedures are continuing to ensure that there has been no threat to public safety.

We have continued to seek to refine and improve our processes, notably in our fitness to practise function, and an independent audit found that the changes we made in mid 2014 are seeing standards improve that will allow us to deliver even higher standards in the future.

We would like to go further, to deliver a better service to both chiropractors and the patients we protect. But the legislation that governs us prevents us from making many of the changes that we would like.

We welcomed the Department of Health's statement at the end of 2015 that they wish to introduce legislation that will allow us to make these changes, and we look forward to working with officials this year to help them draft a Bill that will be widely accepted and, when it is eventually presented to Parliament, engages cross party support.