

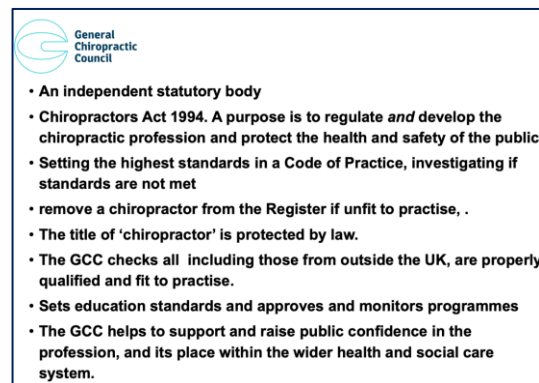
The discussion involves Nick Jones, the Chief Executive and Registrar of the General Chiropractic Council (GCC), covering a variety of topics related to the regulation of chiropractic practice in the UK. Key points include:

Introduction and Background

- Nick Jones provides an overview of his background in social sciences and his transition into regulatory roles, leading to his position at the GCC. His experience in housing regulation and healthcare regulation, including his work with the Care Quality Commission, informs his approach to chiropractic regulation.

The Role and Approach of the GCC

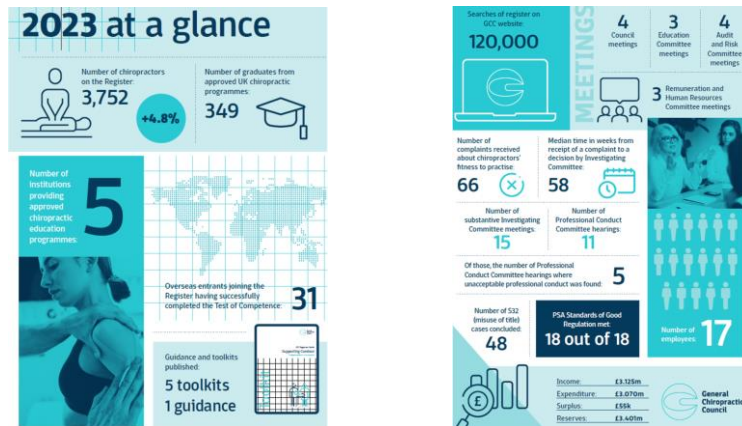
- The GCC's role is to regulate chiropractic practice in the UK, ensuring public safety and setting standards for the profession. It has an equal mix of registrant (chiropractors) and lay members on its council, which helps provide a balanced approach to decision-making.
- There is discussion on the public's perception of regulators, with chiropractors sometimes associating regulation with fear or apprehension. Nick Jones acknowledges this visceral reaction and emphasizes the GCC's intention to regulate proportionately and sensibly.
- The fitness to practice process, a key area of concern among chiropractors, is addressed. The GCC is legally required to investigate all complaints, and it works to do so fairly. However, Nick notes the complexity and challenges of this process, including the involvement of external parties like the police or coroners, which can prolong investigations.



Balancing Regulation and Profession Development

- The GCC's duty to regulate extends to setting educational standards, facilitating continuing professional development (CPD), and promoting good practice. Despite not directly promoting the chiropractic profession, the GCC works to support the profession's development while maintaining a primary focus on public safety.
- Nick Jones mentions that while GCC regulations, including CPD requirements, might feel burdensome to some practitioners, they are in place to uphold standards and ensure that practitioners stay current with evolving healthcare practices.

- A new code of practice is discussed, which proposes an increase in the number of standards to better address modern-day healthcare challenges, including safety and collaborative care. This proposed code aims to keep the standards relevant and reflective of the current professional environment.



Public Perception and Professional Candour

- The discussion touches on the GCC's efforts to be transparent and approachable while balancing its regulatory responsibilities. Nick Jones emphasizes the importance of professional candour, ensuring that practitioners are open and honest with patients, especially when things go wrong in their care.
- The topic of protecting chiropractors versus the public is explored, with the GCC's primary role being to protect public safety. However, Nick notes that the GCC also seeks to work alongside chiropractors, aiming not to act against their interests while fulfilling its mandate.

Fitness to Practice Process and Its Challenges

- Nick Jones explains that fitness to practice cases can be lengthy and complex, with an average processing time of around two years. This is partly due to procedural requirements and the involvement of third parties. The GCC's approach to fitness to practice is guided by the principle of proportionality, aiming to handle each case appropriately while considering both public safety and fairness to practitioners.
- There is an acknowledgment of the emotional toll of these proceedings on practitioners and complainants, particularly in sensitive cases, such as those involving professional boundaries. Proposed reforms are discussed that may introduce quicker and more humane case resolution processes.

Code of Practice and Standards

- The current code of practice contains 55 standards, and a new proposed code would increase this number to 81, introducing principles around safety and collaboration. The intention is to reflect modern healthcare practices better and provide a comprehensive framework for chiropractic care.
- The difficulty of practitioners keeping up with all these standards is acknowledged, but Nick Jones stresses the importance of awareness of these standards to provide safe, patient-centered care.

Interprofessional Relations

- The issue of relations with other healthcare professionals, such as GPs and physiotherapists, is raised, with concerns that some may dismiss chiropractic care or advise patients against it. Nick Jones states that such behavior is unprofessional and that there should be more interdisciplinary communication and mutual respect.
- The discussion also touches on chiropractors' frustration with having multiple professional associations and the need for a united front when dealing with external challenges.

Regulatory Reform and Future Plans

- The process for regulatory reform, including potential changes to the CPD cycle and fitness to practice procedures, is covered. While Nick expresses a desire for more flexibility in these areas, he notes that changes require parliamentary approval and time.
- The GCC is currently focused on revising its strategy to 2030, including engaging with the profession to explore new arrangements for developing the profession and ensuring continued public safety.

Closing Thoughts

- Nick Jones emphasizes the importance of transparency, collaboration, and maintaining the balance between regulation and the profession's development. He acknowledges the challenges faced by chiropractors and expresses the GCC's commitment to being a fair and effective regulator.

