



Society of Hospital Play Specialist (SoHPS) Fitness to Practice Policy

Background

The Society of Hospital Play Specialists (SoHPS) requires every individual on the public register to meet standards of proficiency as far as those standards relate to their scope of practice. The public register includes Registered Hospital Play Specialists, Students and Apprentices. Registered Hospital Play Specialists, Students and Apprentices are considered fit to practise when they can demonstrate the skills, knowledge, character, health, and wellbeing to practise their profession safely and effectively.

The Fitness to Practice framework supports Registrants, Students or Apprentices to gain and sustain the personal knowledge, skills, experience, insight, and health required to meet SoHPS' registration standards. The framework encompasses the SoHPS Professional Standards ([Professional Standards](#)). SoHPS' Professional Standards set out the standards of practice and behaviour expected of Registrants, Students or Apprentices. The SoHPS Fitness to Practice policy provides a framework which safeguards all decision making by SoHPS in all matters relating to fitness to practise.

Fitness to practise also covers issues outside of professional or clinical performance which compromise the safety of the public or brings the profession of Hospital Play Specialists into disrepute. The conduct of an HPS professional outside of their working environment will involve fitness to practise where that conduct could be deemed to undermine public confidence in the profession.

A Registered Health Play Specialist is required to complete an annual re-registration. In their annual re-registration they declare and demonstrate that they practise safely and in so doing, adhere to the expected Professional Standards. In addition to a SoHPS registration number, Students and Apprentices declare compliance with the SoHPS Professional Standards as part of their entry to training. This declaration of compliance applies for the duration of their training.

Purpose of the fitness to practise process

The fitness to practise policy is designed to help safeguard the public, child, family, and employees in Health Care. The policy safeguards them from potential and actual risks posed by those Registrants, Students and Apprentices whose practice does not meet the required standards.

If a Registrant's, Student's, or Apprentice's fitness to practise is compromised it means there are complaints and concerns about their ability to practise safely and effectively. As such, their practice may be negatively affected, and they can be deemed not fit to practise. This may include either one or more than one of the following, namely, that:

- They should not practise at all
- Recommendation is made regarding further training or education to support a restoration of safe practice
- Recommendations are made to the registrant and their Trust or College regarding the boundaries within which they should be permitted to work.

The SoHPS Fitness to Practice Policy has a primary function to investigate and assess current complaints and concerns where they are raised. This function initially applies in an immediate context to help ensure there is an appropriate and proportionate response to the concern raised. Registrants, Students and Apprentices can be confident that the policy is not designed to investigate or respond to:

- Historic complaints and concerns where these have not previously been raised
- Secondary evidence provided by other health care professionals to support a known complaint where these complaints and concerns have not been previously and independently raised
- Secondary evidence or direct complaints and concerns from a health care professional who is no longer employed in the identified setting
- Complaints and concerns which upon review by SoHPS are found to be unsubstantiated or deemed to be malicious.

SoHPS will investigate all complaints and concerns made in writing to the Registration Co-ordinator; including but not exclusively matters pertaining to:

- Misconduct
- Lack of competence
- Criminal behaviour
- Physical or mental health

SoHPS has a duty of care to respond to fitness to practice complaints and concerns appropriately and proportionately. Registrants, Students and Apprentices should be aware that in the appropriate implementation of the SoHPS Fitness to Practice Policy, SoHPS will refer safeguarding complaints and concerns on to other professional bodies where it is appropriate and a legal requirement to do so. In some cases, a past event raised as part of an investigation will require a finding of current impairment to fulfil their role. This is to protect the public interest, even where the registrant does not currently present a risk of harm to other health care professionals and service users. Further investigation in such cases is in accordance with the safeguarding and compliance policies of local Health Care Trusts which cover safeguarding and criminal complaints and concerns.

Raising a concern or making a complaint

If a complainant has a concern about the fitness to practice of a Registrant, Student or Apprentice, in the first instance they should raise their concern, with the employer, college or university. It may be possible to appropriately resolve the concern at a local level.

If a complainant considers a concern is not appropriately resolved at a local level, the matter should be referred to SoHPS as a concern or a complaint.

Details of how to communicate a concern relating to the practice of SoHPS Registrants, Students and Apprentices, can be found in the SoHPS Fitness to Practice Policy on our website. Complaints and concerns in writing should be addressed to the SoHPS Registration email: registration@sophs.org.uk.

The SoHPS process following receipt of a complaint or concern

- A complaint or concern is acknowledged by the SoHPS Registration Co-ordinator. The complaint or concern is then forwarded in writing to the SoHPS Finance and Clinical Governance Lead and the Chair of SoHPS.

- The SoHPS Finance and Clinical Governance Lead and the Chair of SoHPS liaise and agree an appropriate investigation pathway and timeline. An Investigation Lead is designated from the SoHPS Board. The Registration Coordinator is updated.
- The SoHPS Registration Co-ordinator informs the complainant of the investigation pathway and requests a written statement from the complainant.
- The SoHPS Registration Co-ordinator writes to the Human Resources manager in the complainant's setting making them aware of the initial complaint or concern.
- The SoHPS Registration Co-ordinator contacts the Registrant, Student or Apprentice against whom the complaint has been made, informing them in writing of the complaint and requests a written statement within an identified time of ten working days.
- As part of an investigation process the SoHPS Registration Co-ordinator may also be directed by the Investigation Lead to contact employers, colleges, witnesses, and the awarding bodies; to share information or to invite statements.
- The Investigation Lead reviews all evidence and reports back to the Clinical Governance and Finance Lead and the Chair of SoHPS. A decision may be taken at this point to refer back to the Human Resources Manager of the Registrant, Student or Apprentice against whom the complaint has been made. Similarly, referring on to any other appropriate professional body in accordance with the safeguarding and compliance policy of a local Health Care Trust.
- For reasons of safety and integrity at this point in the process, SoHPS may decide to suspend an individual from the register. This is an interim measure whilst a Fitness to Practice investigation continues.
- Following an investigation, SoHPS may proceed to conduct a Fitness to Practice hearing via a Fitness to Practice panel made up of members of SoHPS Board, and or other appropriate external representatives.

The Fitness to Practice panel can make the following decisions:

1. No case to answer
2. Restrictions to practice while the Registrant, Student or Apprentice undertakes further training or education to support a restoration of safe practice

3. Restrictions to practice while skills and knowledge are demonstrated at the level required for registration.
4. Suspension from the register for a set period, with detailed feedback on the requirements which need to be met to regain entry to the register.
5. Permanent removal from the register.

If a complainant considers that an internal setting investigation has not been appropriately carried out or resolved.

In such a case, a complainant may refer the matter to SoHPS in confidence via the Registration Co-ordinator: registration@sohps.org.uk.