

Developing the UK medical register: a public consultation

Submission from the Architects Registration Board (ARB) – the UK's statutory regulator of Architects

We are making a submission on the basis that we are a statutory regulator mandated to maintain a statutory Register. **We are unable to offer a view on what the medical Register should or should not contain but we can offer reflections based on our experience of maintaining a statutory Register.**

ARB derives its mandate from the Architects Act 1997. The Act requires us to maintain an up-to-date Register of Architects, publishing their names and addresses. Where an architect has given us permission, we also publish telephone numbers, email addresses and their website. In exceptional cases, where circumstances dictate, an architect's name can appear on the Register with the address listed as c/o the Registrar at our office address.

As a regulator we are monitoring moves in regulatory policy relating to developing statutory Registers and are mindful both of the enquiries for further information which we receive, and of the parameters within which we operate, as set by statute.

With this in mind we feel the following observations may be helpful:

- As with the GMC, we have moved away from producing a hard copy Register (although it can still be purchased in PDF format). The Register is now online which enables us to provide the public with up-to-date information.
- The database we use to manage the Register contains additional information about the registrant including private contact details, dates of registration, retention fee payments, scanned copies of correspondence and a section where administrative comments are recorded.
- Once an architect has gone through the application process and been added to the Register, they can either update their contact details via our online portal, using a private logon code, or contact us in writing and ask for their details to be updated. Nonetheless, all contact detail updates are verified by a member of the staff team to ensure they are genuine and accurate.
- Among the queries we have had from members of the public including consumers, employers and complainants are requests for information regarding i) an architect's specialism (e.g. domestic properties, hospitals, schools, offices etc.); ii) the dates of an architect's registration; iii) any findings of misconduct or incompetence against a given architect; and iv) private contact details not in the public domain.
- Information about spent and current convictions for professional misconduct or incompetence are held in tables, stored within the public information section of the website.
- As a regulator, the quality of the information held on the Register is of paramount importance, hence the stringent checks undertaken on applications for registration and the careful verification of changes to contact details. Any additional information would also need to be stringently verified and this would have implications in terms of time, cost and resources which would have to be funded.

- The legislative vehicle, for extending a regulator's powers in terms of the range of information covered would also need to be considered.

Conclusions

The ARB does not have a position on whether we are for or against such changes in terms of our own Register. Nonetheless, we are interested in the debate surrounding both the benefits of extending the range of information published on a statutory Register as well as the safeguards and resources which would need to be put in place to ensure this was done accurately and effectively.

We would be interested to hear more about this piece of work and would be happy to participate in further elements of this consultation process if that were helpful.

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