

Strategic plan

2014–2017

General Pharmaceutical Council

Strategic plan 2014–2017

Strategic plan presented to Parliament
and the Scottish Parliament pursuant
to Paragraph 8 of Schedule 1 of the
Pharmacy Order 2010

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Foreword by the chair and chief executive

We began work as the independent pharmacy regulator in September 2010. Our top priority in the first three years of our operation has been to ensure that we are delivering our core regulatory services efficiently and effectively. The work needed to do this has inevitably meant a lot of our energy has been quite internally focused. Since we began work the external context within which we work has changed hugely. We have seen:

- major and ongoing change in how health services are organised throughout Great Britain
- the continuing steep rise in public expectations of what regulators can and should be achieving
- Robert Francis's reports into the appalling failures at Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust, and related seminal reviews and reports including the Keogh review and the Berwick report
- the launch of a UK-wide programme to redefine the balance between the scope of medicines legislation and statutory pharmacy regulation
- the challenges facing everyone working in pharmacy to make the very best contribution which pharmacy can offer to the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

This is our first fundamental review of strategy since the successful completion of our 'set-up' phase. In talking with our external and internal stakeholders and colleagues about the future strategy for pharmacy regulation we kept coming back to a few basic questions:

- Should pharmacy regulation be about assurance of 'minimum standards' or do we as the pharmacy regulator have a role to play in promoting improvement in standards and ultimately in health?
- How can regulation protect the public effectively without holding back pharmacy practice from developing dynamically and innovatively, which it needs to do in the public interest?
- Can we retain a clear focus on our core regulatory functions whilst serving a wider purpose?
- What does it mean to be proactive and ambitious as the pharmacy regulator, without over-promising to deliver outcomes which are inherently beyond the reach of a body which must work within its statutory remit and functions?

This strategic plan gives our answers to these questions. Based on our experience of pharmacy regulation to date, and our engagement with health regulation

more widely, our council has formed a clear view that the GPhC must retain a relentless focus on our core regulatory functions and continue always to prioritise the effective and efficient delivery of our statutory duties. We have, equally clearly, rejected the notion that we must choose between this priority and an ambition to use regulation strategically as a lever for improvement in pharmacy. A ‘minimum standards’ or safety net approach to regulation would not enable pharmacy to rise to the many challenges which rapidly changing medicines and modes of practice present, and to the varying types and levels of risk in pharmacy. At the same time, the public rightly has an expectation that the bar for entering and remaining within the profession is rigorously maintained. We believe regulation is about both maintaining that bar and using it to promote continuous improvement, on the part of individual professionals, the profession as a whole, and the registered pharmacies out of which professional services are provided.

We are one part of a complex system in each country of Great Britain for overseeing and improving the quality of pharmacy care and services. In all areas of our work we understand that effective joint working with partner organisations and other regulators

is essential if we are to achieve what we have set out to.

We have a statutory requirement to submit our strategic plan to Parliament and the Scottish Parliament annually. We will therefore update the strategic plan each year. Our intention, however, is that our work for the next three years should be shaped by this strategic plan, so we currently expect to make minor changes only in each of the next two years.



Bob Nicholls CBE
Chair



Duncan Rudkin
Chief Executive

Our mission

Our statutory objective has been set for us by Parliament and the Scottish Parliament:

To protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and well-being of members of the public and in particular of those members of the public who use or need the services of registrants, or the services provided at a registered pharmacy, by ensuring that registrants, and those persons carrying on a retail pharmacy business at a registered pharmacy, adhere to such standards as the Council considers necessary for the safe and effective practice of pharmacy.

Our vision

Our vision is for pharmacy regulation to play its part in improving quality in pharmacy practice and ultimately health and well-being in England, Scotland and Wales.

What we do

We have these core functions:

- setting the standards of education and training which pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must meet in order to join our register and to remain registered throughout their professional life
- registering pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and setting the standards of conduct and performance which they must meet in order to stay on our register
- setting standards which must be met by the owners of registered pharmacies and the pharmacists who act as superintendents in company-owned pharmacies
- registering pharmacies which meet those standards and inspecting them to check that they continue to do so, as the services they provide and the environment within which they operate constantly change
- taking action when our standards are not met.

These functions are the essential levers available to us to achieve our aims.

We understand that we need to carry out these functions efficiently and effectively so that we can also credibly make our contribution to improving pharmacy by:

- using standards to 'raise the bar' over time to promote improvement
- making good use of what we learn about pharmacy from our core regulatory functions and what we learn about pharmacy from others
- speaking out to influence pharmacy, and pharmacy-related policy development, in line with our vision
- providing a regulatory framework within which professionalism can flourish.

Our key themes for 2014-2017

We will focus on four key themes:

- 1** proactive good quality regulatory services
 - 2** putting people at the heart of what we do as a regulator
 - 3** using the knowledge gained from our regulatory services and from our work with others in order to promote improvement in the quality of pharmacy care and services
 - 4** promoting a culture of patient-centred professionalism in pharmacy.
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Proactive good quality regulatory services

In the timescale covered by this strategic plan:

- concerns about the fitness to practise of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians will be resolved safely, fairly and speedily, with 95% of fitness to practise cases concluded within 12 months
 - we will be making better links between quality assured information from different sources so that our regulatory interventions can be more effectively targeted
 - we will be using intelligence networks and effective operational partnerships with other regulators throughout Great Britain to identify and tackle issues and risks in pharmacy
- the standards which pharmacies are achieving for and with patients will be measurably improved as a result of the information we share about our inspection findings
 - our scrutiny of the quality of education and training will ensure that newly qualified pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are ready not just to play their part in protecting and improving people's health and well-being when they start work but also to update and develop their knowledge, skills and practice as pharmacy continues to evolve.
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Putting people at the heart of what we do as a regulator

In the timescale covered by this strategic plan:

- we will be reaching out to patients and carers – and their representatives and advocates – to support them in being well-informed and confident users of pharmacy services and to assist them in raising queries and concerns
 - all our regulatory policy development will have patient and service user involvement embedded throughout our process, from the outset through to implementation and evaluation
 - people who use services provided at registered pharmacies and by pharmacists and pharmacy technicians will be supported and enabled to share experiences and concerns with us to inform all aspects of our work.
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Using the knowledge gained from our regulatory services and from our work with others in order to promote improvement in the quality of pharmacy care and services

In the timescale covered by this strategic plan:

- as well as using our regulatory levers to promote improvement in pharmacy, we will be using our securely held knowledge and information to improve our own work as the pharmacy regulator
 - we will be analysing data from our regulatory functions and critically scrutinising intelligence about pharmacy issues and risks, in order to keep our standards up to date, and to inform targeted regulatory interventions across all our areas of responsibility and then to evaluate their impact
 - we will be playing back to the profession and to pharmacy stakeholders the feedback we gather from people using pharmacy services, and from our assurance activities, to inform their work to improve quality in pharmacy.
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Using regulation to promote a culture of patient-centred professionalism in pharmacy

In the timescale covered by this strategic plan:

- we will work with patients and other users of pharmacy services, and with pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and their leaders and representatives, to build together a vision for patient-centred professionalism in pharmacy
 - we will ensure that this patient-centred professionalism is fundamental to:
 - pharmacy education and training, and
 - the standards which we set for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy owners and superintendent pharmacists
 - we will strengthen the assurance we are able to provide as to the continuing fitness to practise of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians; our agreed vision of patient-centred professionalism will provide the core standard against which pharmacy professionals will be asked to give an evidence-based account of themselves and their practice.
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