

National Data Guardian  
by email: [ndgoffice@nhs.net](mailto:ndgoffice@nhs.net)

Thursday, 21 March 2019

Dear Sir / Madam,

## Consultation on priorities

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) regulates pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies in Great Britain. We work to assure and improve standards of care for people using pharmacy services.

Our role is to protect the public and give them assurance that they will receive safe and effective care when using pharmacy services. We do this by:

- setting standards for pharmacy professionals and pharmacies to enter and remain on our register
- seeking assurance that pharmacy professionals and pharmacies continue to meet our standards, including by inspecting pharmacies
- acting to protect the public and to uphold public confidence in pharmacy if there are concerns about a pharmacy professional or pharmacy on our register

Through our work we help to promote professionalism, support continuous improvement and assure the quality and safety of pharmacy.

We are responding only to the consultation questions directly relevant to our role:

**7. Should *Getting the basics right: information sharing for individual care* be one of the NDG's top priorities?**

Yes, the GPhC considers that this should be one of the NDG's top priorities.

**8. Are the outlined areas of NDG interest the right ones for the NDG under this priority? (Please tell us if there are other areas we should be looking at under this theme, or if you think others would be better placed to do the work).**

Yes, the GPhC agrees with the three areas identified. Working with other organisations such as the Information Commissioner's Office and others identified in answers below will be important.

**9. What would you like to see the NDG do in this area?**

- **Working with bodies leading on education and training to ensure that those working within the health and care system are equipped to handle and share data with confidence**

The GPhC is responsible for setting standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy professionals as well as assuring that practising pharmacy professionals remain up to date through a process of revalidation. We are currently consulting on changes to the standards for initial education and training for pharmacists. The proposed learning outcomes link to our standards for pharmacy professionals and cover respect for personal privacy and confidentiality as part of person-centred care and collaboration and partnership working. It is our expectation that students learn to apply the legal and professional requirements around the management of information to ensure patient confidentiality, as well as to understand when it is appropriate to share information with others involved in the care of the patient.

We would be interested in working further with the NDG in this area. We would also welcome your comments either through the consultation or in further correspondence.

- **Encouraging better sharing for individual care across boundaries, particularly between health and social care**

The GPhC's standards for pharmacy professionals include person-centred care and effective communication, as well as confidentiality and privacy. We agree that sharing information appropriately is an important aspect of ensuring care is delivered effectively. We consider there would be benefits in the NDG working with training organisations, such as Health Education England and the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education, to develop CPD activities to cover this area.

In addition, the NDG could consider working with organisations involved in reviewing healthcare concerns or incidents, including regulators, independent investigators and the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch, to develop further guidance around areas of weakness identified.

- **Reviewing existing Caldicott guidelines with a view to giving further clarity or guidance which would support appropriate sharing**

The GPhC is aware through some of the concerns raised by patients with us of some of the issues faced by pharmacy professionals in sharing information with other health and social care professionals, and clear guidance would be helpful in addressing some of these issues. As there are other sources of guidance from other organisations, including the ICO and NHS, it would be useful for the NDG to cross reference where appropriate.

**10. Should Safeguarding a confidential health and care system be one of the NDG's top priorities?**

Yes, the GPhC considers that this should be one of the NDG's top priorities.

- 11. Are the outlined areas of NDG interest the right ones for the NDG under this priority? (Please tell us if there are other areas we should be looking at under this theme, or if you think others would be better placed to do the work).**

Yes, the GPhC agrees with the two areas identified.

- 12. What would you like to see the NDG do in this area?**

- **Clarifying the interplay between the requirements of common law and data protection law with an aim of finding a way to explain this so that clinicians and patients can understand**

The GPhC has seen concerns from patients about information being shared between healthcare professionals. Some accessible guidance for patients about what to reasonably expect and how and why professionals involved in their care decide to share information would be helpful. The NDG is ideally placed to issue such guidance given her role in safeguarding public trust.

- **Progressing the concept of reasonable expectations as an important aspect to shape the boundaries of information sharing**

The GPhC agrees this is important. Given the pressures on healthcare professionals, it is a practical way of ensuring appropriate information is shared. The NDG should consider including this in guidance and working with training and education organisations to educate healthcare professionals.

Yours faithfully,



Mark Voce

Director of Education and Standards