



Fitness to Practise: Frequently asked questions

We recognise that the fitness to practise (FTP) process may be unfamiliar to you if you are a pharmacy professional, if you have raised a concern with us or if you are otherwise involved in an investigation. This resource is intended to provide answers to some common questions that you may have about fitness to practise.

General information

Q: Where can I find more information about fitness to practise?

More information about how we manage concerns can be found on the [raising concerns](#) page on our website.

What can happen at each stage is set out in our *Good decision-making* guidance documents.

- [Investigations and threshold criteria guidance](#)
- [Investigating committee meetings and outcomes guidance](#)
- [Good decision making: Fitness to practise hearings and sanctions guidance](#)

Q: What type of concerns will the GPhC investigate?

We investigate concerns about pharmacists and pharmacy technicians that could suggest there is a risk to patient safety or could affect the public's confidence in pharmacy. We also deal with concerns about pharmacies. Examples of things we may investigate include:

- serious unprofessional or inappropriate behaviour
- dispensing errors
- criminal conduct
- dishonesty or fraud
- working under the influence of drinks or drugs
- having a health condition that affects the professional's ability to practise safely
- poor professional performance
- practising while not on our register

We will not investigate concerns that relate to:

- claims for compensation

- customer service issues, for example not receiving an apology from pharmacy staff
- contract issues, for example hours of opening, charges for private prescriptions

Please refer to our website for [further information on raising concerns](#).

Q: What can I expect from the GPhC if I'm part of an investigation?

We believe in taking a person-centred approach to fitness to practise. This means that we'll put people at the heart of what we do to help us understand the concern and the impact on everyone involved. We believe in providing a high level of customer service. This means that we will:

- communicate with you clearly and tailor our communications to address your needs
- explain what you can expect from us
- handle your information with care
- act with professionalism, kindness and respect at all times
- provide an accessible service to everyone involved
- listen and respond to feedback and use this to learn and improve our services

If you have a concern raised about you or if you have raised a concern, a dedicated case officer will be assigned to your case. The case officer will investigate the concern and gather evidence to see what action is required. They will be your main point of contact during the investigation. Occasionally, it will be necessary to transfer a concern to another case officer. If this happens, we'll let you know and a new dedicated case officer will be in contact to introduce themselves to you.

Q: How long is the investigation process and when can I expect an outcome?

The length of an investigation depends on the nature of the concern and its complexity. We aim to finish an investigation as soon as possible. This is usually within six months of receiving a concern. We will keep you updated on the progress of the investigation every two months. At the end of the investigation, we will inform you of our decision.

I'm a pharmacy professional that has had a concern raised about me or has self-referred

Q: What should I do if I've been told I am being investigated by the GPhC?

It's important to be aware that at this stage, we have not made a decision about the concern(s) raised and whether this information means your fitness to practise is impaired. You may continue to practise as a pharmacy professional unless we tell you not to do so. We'll keep you regularly updated throughout the investigation and once we make any decision we will tell you about the outcome.

We recommend that you:

- seek advice about the investigation - sources of advice include your professional body, defence organisations and legal professionals
- co-operate with, and engage in, the process throughout
- keep the GPhC informed of any change in your personal contact details.

Q: I have been diagnosed with a health condition and I'm struggling to cope with the stress it's causing me. I'm concerned that going through the FtP process may make matters worse. Should I declare my health condition to the GPhC?

Declaring a health condition may lead to an investigation and we recognise that this may be stressful. But it's important to tell us about any health issues which may affect your ability to practise as a pharmacy professional. This ensures that patients and people using pharmacy services receive safe and effective care.

In most cases, health matters will not raise formal fitness to practise concerns. Our health process is not designed to punish you, it's there to ensure that you are safe to practise.

At any point during your contact with us, from the first point of raising a concern, or making a referral, or attending a hearing, if you need particular support or an adjustment, please let us know and we'll be happy to help.

Q: How will the GPhC investigate a concern about me?

We collect the information that is submitted to us securely and carefully review and assess all concerns in order to consider whether we need to begin an investigation.

If we decide that an investigation is required we'll let you know. We will continue our enquiries and gather as much information as we need to make a decision on what to do next. You can **find out more about investigations and the outcomes we can reach in our guidance document**.

How an investigation is carried out depends on the individual facts of a case. Usually an investigation will include:

- speaking to the person who raised the concern and any witnesses
- speaking to the pharmacy professional involved
- working closely with GPhC inspectors, which may include visiting the registered pharmacy premises where an alleged incident(s) took place.

Depending on the nature of the concern, we may need to get witness statements and evidence from:

- patients
- members of the public
- members of the pharmacy team
- employers
- other healthcare practitioners

- the police
- other regulators.

We'll share information about this investigation with your current employer or locum agency if the issues being investigated raise immediate concerns about patient or public safety. We may, if necessary, ask your employer for documentation that could help us with our investigation.

Q: Will information about my fitness to practise be available to the public?

We'll generally publish information on our website and online register about all Investigating Committee and Fitness to Practise Committee outcomes. However, if any private matters or sensitive information are involved, these decisions will not be published or will be published in redacted (edited) form.

As well as the information we publish on the register and our website, we may give more information to employers and a limited number of relevant bodies such as other regulators.

Please refer to our [**publication and disclosure policy**](#) for further details.

Q: Will I be removed from the register if a concern is raised about me?

If a concern has been raised about you, this will **not** automatically result in your name being removed from the register. Removing a pharmacy professional's registration is used for the most serious concerns, where their behaviour is incompatible with being a registered professional. The Fitness to Practise Committee will only impose this sanction if it is necessary to protect the public, maintain public confidence in the profession or maintain proper professional standards. The committee can't remove a pharmacy professional's registration if the concern raised relates solely to their health.

Please refer to our [**Good decision making: Fitness to practise hearings and sanctions guidance**](#) for more information on removal from the register and the other sanctions available to the Fitness to Practise Committee.

I am a witness that is attending a hearing

Q: I am a witness in an upcoming hearing. What can I expect?

Giving evidence before the Fitness to Practise Committee is likely to be unfamiliar to you and can seem daunting. We want to make your experience as a witness as positive as it can be and aim to support you throughout your involvement in the hearing.

A member of our witness team will provide you with information before you attend the hearing, including if the hearing is taking place remotely. They will meet you on the morning of the hearing, introduce you to the GPhC's case presenter and show you round the hearing room before you need to give your evidence.

Where possible, the case presenter will give all witnesses the likely running order at the start of the day and will keep you updated as to when it's likely that you will give your evidence. The chair of the committee will make sure that the hearing is managed fairly. You will be given regular breaks and you can request one when you need it. We welcome any queries you may have before a hearing, to help put

you at ease when you attend. There will be an opportunity to provide us with feedback of your experience as a witness. This feedback will help us to continuously review and improve our processes. We will let you know about the outcome of the hearing when it has been decided.

You can find more information about being a witness on our website.

Sources of support

Q: What other resources do you have that I can refer to?

We publish a number of guidance documents and resources to support our fitness to practise procedures. They provide detailed information about each aspect of the overall process and can be useful to help understand what to expect. These include:

- FtP Glossary of terms
- **Identifying underlying health issues**
- **Undertakings bank**
- **Conditions bank**
- **Investigations and threshold criteria guidance**
- **Investigating committee meetings and outcomes guidance**
- **Hearings and sanctions guidance.**

There are also a number of organisations that you can refer to for independent support, dependent on your personal circumstances. These include:

- **Pharmacist Support**

Pharmacist Support is an independent, trusted charity providing a wide variety of support services to pharmacists and their families, former pharmacists and pharmacy students. You can **contact Pharmacist Support by email, live chat, post or freephone.**

- **Alcoholics anonymous**

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; they are self-supporting through our own contributions. **You can contact AA by telephone or email.**

- **Narcotics Anonymous**

Narcotics Anonymous is a non-profit fellowship or society of people for whom drugs had become a major problem. They are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. **You can contact Narcotics Anonymous by phone and email.**

- **Citizens Advice**

Citizens Advice provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. They can provide advice on a range of topics including benefits, work, debt and money, consumer rights, family and housing, law and the courts, immigration and health matters. They value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination. **You can contact Citizens Advice by visiting one of their local branches in 3,500 locations or by phone, web chat or online.**

- **Samaritans**

You can talk to Samaritans at any time about anything that is troubling you. Anything that is disclosed to Samaritans is completely confidential. They can help you explore your options, understand your problems better, or just be there to listen. Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. **You can contact Samaritans by phone, post or find a local branch.**

- **Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK (APTUK)**

The Association of Pharmacy Technicians United Kingdom (APTUK) is the national professional leadership body for pharmacy technicians working in all pharmacy sectors across all countries in the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. APTUK, through strong, influential representative leadership, supports person centered professionalism by encouraging in their membership, the attitudes and behaviors associated with outstanding healthcare professionals. You can contact **APTUK by email or phone.**