Medical assessments
Guidance for Assessors

Introduction

The GPhC has asked you to undertake a medical assessment (and provide a report) about a pharmacy professional (a registrant) for one or more of the following reasons:

• The registrant has made a declaration that they have a health condition
• The GPhC has received a concern about a registrant’s health
• The GPhC is investigating an issue that falls within the scope of the Identifying Underlying Health Issues policy.

It is your responsibility based on the information provided to ensure you have the knowledge and skills required to perform an assessment. If you feel this is not within your expertise, you must inform the GPhC as soon as possible.

About medical assessments

The purpose of the assessment, and associated report, is to provide evidence to the GPhC about any condition, if it is being managed by the registrant, and any risks that condition may present to the registrant or patients and the public. An Assessor’s duty is to provide an expert opinion and advice only on matters within his or her expertise. You should not provide an opinion on whether the registrant is fit to practise.

The presence of a health condition does not automatically mean a registrant should not continue to practice. However, in some cases it might adversely impact on their ability to practise safely, and there might be a risk to patient safety. The risk must be a real risk and not a hypothetical risk which might potentially present itself in the future if circumstances changed, for example, the illness worsens, or the registrant no longer manages their health issue appropriately. The health condition may also prevent a registrant from undertaking any of the regular tasks carried out by a pharmacy professional. We therefore require an assessment to help us make the right decision on what action, if any, to take in relation to a particular concern.

If you have immediate concerns about a registrant who is (or may) still be practising you should telephone the GPhC and speak to a member of the Investigations and Case Management team. In these circumstances, you are likely to be asked to provide your report (or an interim report) as a matter of urgency so that steps can be taken to ensure the public and the registrant is adequately protected.
The assessment (or examination)

When you receive our letter of instruction you should acknowledge receipt of it within 48 hours. You should then contact the registrant and arrange a date, time and place for the examination.

The registrant’s contact details, including their preferred means of contact, appear on the completed consent form that will be enclosed with your instructions.

The examination should be arranged within 14 days of receipt of the letter of instruction and should be arranged to take place as soon as is reasonably possible after receipt of the initial letter. If there is likely to be a delay in conducting the examination you are required to notify the GPhC as soon as possible. You should record all attempts to contact the registrant including any messages left. There must be an audit trail of all contacts with the registrant and any other third parties.

In advance of the appointment you should:

- Read the materials which have been sent to you by GPhC and obtain any additional documents that you may require.
- Consider how you will conduct the examination including any special arrangements and/or requirements.
- Consider any testing to be undertaken and advise the registrant of the extent of any examination which will take place.
- Give consideration to, and make provision for, all appropriate diagnostic testing.
- Obtain any additional information you consider necessary.
- Consider the necessity for a chaperone.
- Review the report template to ensure that you secure sufficient information to complete all parts of the form following the appointment.

At the appointment you should undertake all the necessary mental and physical examinations and testing (where the facilities exist). If testing facilities are not available, you should make alternative arrangements and advise the GPhC of these immediately. If you are unable to make arrangements, you should also notify the GPhC immediately.

Should the registrant fail to attend for an appointment you should notify the GPhC immediately.

The medical report

Your report should be completed in the format required by the GPhC. The template report sets out a detailed declaration which all Medical Assessors should include in every report. You should not speculate but should provide only factual information and you should not certify something that you are unable to verify.

Medical assessors must ensure that they disclose all information that is relevant to the GPhC but should be aware of their obligations of confidentiality to other patients, particularly the registrant’s family. Reasons must be given clearly and concisely and the advice to the GPhC must be unambiguous.
Whilst commissioned, and paid for, by the GPhC your report should be your own independent and impartial assessment of the individual who you have been asked to examine and report upon (and perhaps supervise). Your opinion is an essential part of the process.

The opinion section (section 17) of the report is very important. The section is designed to help you identify risks, highlight a pharmacy professional’s insight and awareness of their condition and look at ways to reduce any risk. You must give clear and comprehensive reasons for your opinion. These will be needed in each section of the opinion. You should not give an assessment on whether the pharmacy professional is fit to practise.

**After you have written your report**

Your report should be sent to the GPhC by e-mail and in hard copy within one month of receipt of your instructions. Hard copies must have original signatures and dates.

Your completed report will be provided to the registrant in question and may be shared with those advising them, including their own experts and/or treating doctors. The declaration you will sign confirms that you understand that your report will be provided in full to the registrant. The report will form the basis of evidence presented to the relevant decision-making body at the GPhC. This may include those determining applications for registration, issues of fitness to practise and the imposition of interim orders on practice.

You may be asked to attend GPhC hearings to give evidence in relation to the contents of your report and to explain the reasons for your findings. You may also be asked to review reports prepared by other experts in relation to the case.

You may be asked to participate in supervision of a registrant. If so you will be provided with specific directions about the nature and duration of such supervision. You may also make an order with details of the frequency of reporting and requirements for the registrant to comply with attendance at appointments.