

The Right Honourable Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice

By email: AEW.Consultation@justice.gov.uk

22 July 2020

Dear Mr Buckland

Assaults on emergency workers consultation: Submission from the General Pharmaceutical Council

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in Great Britain. Our role is to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public who use pharmacy services in England, Scotland and Wales.

We have a statutory role in relation to ‘system’ regulation (as we regulate registered pharmacies) as well as ‘professional’ regulation of individual pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. Our main work includes:

- setting standards for the education and training of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff, and approving and accrediting their qualifications and training
- maintaining a register of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies
- setting the standards that pharmacy professionals have to meet throughout their careers
- investigating concerns that pharmacy professionals are not meeting our standards, and taking action to restrict their ability to practise when this is necessary to protect patients and the public or to uphold public confidence in pharmacy
- setting standards for registered pharmacies which require them to provide a safe and effective service to patients
- inspecting registered pharmacies to check if they are meeting our standards.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on doubling the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker, in line with the Government’s manifesto commitment. We have limited our response to where we feel our work is directly relevant.

We share the widespread view across pharmacy that there should be zero tolerance for abuse or violence against pharmacy staff and we are supportive of measures which afford emergency workers further protection.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in response to increasing numbers of reports that pharmacy staff were experiencing abuse, disorder and even violence at the hands of some of the public they are trying to help, we have made clear in our public statements that this is completely unacceptable.

We have also provided advice in response to issues raised with us, including advising that pharmacy staff should not be asked to work alone because of potential risks to their safety, as well as safety of patients and the public. Our regulatory approach, standards and guidance are there to help safeguard pharmacy staff, as well as patients and members of the public.

If you would like to discuss our response further, or any other aspects of the GPhC's work, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Duncan Rudkin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Duncan Rudkin
Chief Executive & Registrar