

A guide to giving feedback or making a complaint about our service

Introduction

The GPhC is committed to providing a high quality, transparent and accessible service to everyone we work with, or are in contact with. We welcome all types of feedback about our service, including:

- **Complaints** – if you are unhappy or dissatisfied with the service you've received
- **Comments** – if you want to tell us something
- **Compliments** – if you want to thank someone or give positive feedback

Sometimes we may get things wrong, or we may not be able to help you in the way that you would like. It is important that you tell us about this. This will help us to learn from our mistakes and improve our standards — we see this not as a nuisance, but rather as valuable feedback on the quality of our services.

We handle any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response as a complaint. We call these 'organisational complaints'.

Our aim is to resolve complaints quickly, fairly, proportionately and confidentially. We listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service and prevent recurrences.

Equally, if you have experienced good customer service from our organisation, or you feel someone deserves praise, we would like to hear about this. This helps us to understand what we're doing well and what we can do further improve the services we provide.

What this guide is for

This guide explains how you can provide feedback or make a complaint.

It describes our approach to managing complaints, sets out the responsibilities of our staff in dealing with the complaints and outlines the timescales.

Who can make a complaint

Anyone who comes into contact with our service, and is unhappy or dissatisfied, can provide feedback or make a complaint.

What we investigate

This guide is designed to cover complaints about matters such as:

- the standards of service you have received
- the way in which a fitness to practise case or registration attempt was handled
- the behaviour of our staff, or others working on our behalf, to deliver those services
- any action (or lack of action) by our staff or others working on our behalf
- the way we have communicated with you

However, this guide is **not** designed for:

- concerns about pharmacists and pharmacy technicians - if you want to make a complaint about a pharmacy professional please use the [reporting a concern form](#)
- appeals against the outcome of a fitness to practise investigation or registration attempt
- situations where you have a statutory right of appeal
- comments about council policy or current consultations: if you do have a comment about our policies, we will be happy to receive this and it will be considered as part of policy development. [You can email us about this.](#)
- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints process

How to make a complaint

If you would like to make a complaint please use our [customer service feedback form](#).

Alternatively, you can email us at feedback@pharmacyregulation.org. Or, you can telephone us or write to us using [the contact details on our website](#).

The [customer service feedback form](#) will guide you through the information you need to provide. Please tell us clearly what happened, why you are making a complaint or giving feedback, and what you would like to happen as a result.

You can also use a representative to make a complaint for you. We'll ask you to confirm that you're happy for that person to act for you and will deal with them directly until the conclusion of your complaint. You can tell us at any stage if you no longer want that person to represent you.

Reasonable adjustments

If you have a disability or accessibility needs, we can make reasonable adjustments for you. Please tell us if you have any particular requirements, so we can adjust our process to help you.

How we handle complaints

Our governance team handle the day-to day management of organisational complaints, which includes notifying you of the outcome.

We have a two-stage handling procedure, which we explain in more detail below. At each stage, it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clarity and detail as possible,

including providing any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint. Investigating your complaint will usually involve the following steps:

Acknowledgement

We will write to acknowledge your feedback **within 3 working days**. We may also ask you to confirm any aspect which we are unclear about, and/or provide further details. We will acknowledge any further information you provide at this stage within three working days and start to investigate your feedback.

Stage 1

This is the first opportunity for us to resolve your dissatisfaction. We expect the majority of complaints to be resolved at this stage.

On receipt of your complaint we will contact the relevant Head of Function or Manager from the most appropriate directorate and ask them to respond to your complaint.

We will send you a written explanation of what happened, details of how the situation has been or will be addressed, and the likely timescale for this, where appropriate.

We aim to respond fully **within 15 working days** of acknowledging your full feedback.

Stage 2

If you are dissatisfied with our response at stage 1, you may request a review.

Your request together with all subsequent correspondence relating to it should be sent to the Governance Team who will forward your request to the relevant Director to be reviewed.

We aim to respond fully **within 20 working days** of acknowledging your full review request.

If we have to change any of our timescales, we will let you know and explain why, for example, where the matters you raise require more detailed work.

What you can expect from us

When managing and investigating complaints about the GPhC, we follow the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Principles of Good Administration and Complaints Handling¹, which are:

- Getting it right
- Being customer focused
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

¹ The Ombudsman's Principles outline the approach that they believe public bodies should take when delivering good administration and customer service and how to respond when things go wrong. This approach is also followed by the Professional Standards Authority, who oversee the work of the 10 health and social regulators in the UK, including the General Pharmaceutical Council.

We investigate complaints thoroughly and fairly, to establish the facts, and we make decisions that are proportionate, appropriate and fair. We ensure that complaints are reviewed by someone not involved in the events leading to the complaint.

We deal with complaints sensitively and we ensure that each person raising a complaint is treated as fairly, and without prejudice or unlawful discrimination, and in the context of the specific facts and circumstances.

Continuous improvement is also important to us. We acknowledge mistakes or where things have gone wrong, and we apologise where appropriate. We say whether your complaint has been upheld in full, or in part. And, we outline any learning or actions that we have taken, or will take, as a result of your complaint.

We use the feedback and lessons learnt from complaints to improve our service design and delivery, and we have systems in place to record, analyse and report on the learning from complaints.

What we expect from you

Every complaint we receive is investigated properly, regardless of who the complainant is.

We expect any person who contacts us to respect our staff throughout all dialogue. A lack of respect may result in a withdrawal or restriction of our service. In some cases, we need to limit or control our contact with someone in the interests of our staff, other people who use our services and/or the individual themselves.

Where appropriate, we will deal with such matters in line with our *'Policy on dealing with unacceptable behaviour and unreasonably persistent contact'*.

What happens if, at the end of this process, you are not happy with our response

Once we have reached the end of the process explained above, there are no other ways to take forward your complaint within the GPhC. You should seek independent legal advice if you wish to take this matter further.

You can also **contact the Professional Standards Authority (PSA)**, which oversees the work of the GPhC and other health and social care regulatory authorities.

How we use your information

We manage your information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018, and our privacy policy. You can find out more about this and your rights under data protection legislation **in our privacy policy**.

We also produce regular reports on complaints data to our governing council, to see how well we are dealing with complaints and meeting your needs. We remove all confidential information from these reports to protect the identity of those involved.

We may also share your personal data with other parties if required by law, where ordered by a court, or where it is otherwise in the public interest. Where possible, we remove any identifiable information before we share it with any other party.