

CONSULTATION OF SECTION 38 OF THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015

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 pharmaceutical 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 Section 38 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 and have limited our response to where we feel our work is directly relevant.

Our regulatory approach supports an environment that safeguards children and vulnerable adults. The aim of our standards for pharmacy professionals, and our guidance on raising concerns, is to protect the well-being of patients and the public by empowering pharmacy professionals to raise concerns, even when it is not easy to do so.

The standards promote a culture of person-centred care and reflect the importance of pharmacy professionals using their professional judgement and speaking up when they have concerns or when things go wrong. The standards also include referring patients to other health and social care professionals and sharing of information when appropriate, to ensure patient safety.

Our standards for registered pharmacies set out the expectations on pharmacy owners to create and maintain the right environment for the safe and effective practice of pharmacy. Included, is having adequate governance arrangements in place to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public and specifically to make sure children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded.

We agree that pharmacists (and pharmacy technicians) may be an access point to NHS services if a victim is not registered with a GP or if they do not wish to attend at A&E or other mainstream NHS services, and may therefore be able to identify people who may be potential victims of human trafficking. We therefore welcome your proposals to encourage voluntary notifications from this group of people and their staff. We note in question 2, there is only reference to community pharmacists, we believe there is a strong case for including pharmacy technicians also as they interact closely with vulnerable adults and children as part of their day-to-day activities.

In addition, we note that the consultation is specific to Scotland only. However, as a regulator of pharmacy professionals and pharmacies in Great Britain, we would expect voluntary notifications to apply in each of the countries in Great Britain.

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

Yours faithfully,

Annette Ashley

Head of Policy and Standards

General Pharmaceutical Council