

# Giving a witness statement

This guide explains about why we need you to give a witness statement, and what we will ask you to do to give it. It also explains how we can support you when you give us your statement.

## Why do I have to make a statement?

We can only take action if we have information about what happened, so what you tell us is vital. We need to have a formal, truthful, written record of what you tell us in case the concern goes to the investigating committee. We call this formal record a 'witness statement'. The witness statement would also be important if the concern went to a fitness to practise committee.

We understand that making a statement may seem very formal or unfamiliar. We want to make sure that you can tell us about what happened in a way that is as quick and easy for you as possible. We will support you to do this and your case officer will tell you more about how we can help.

We need to make sure that people receive safe and effective pharmacy care. If you have any information about a time when this may not have happened, it's important that you tell us about it. This will help us make sure that other people are not put at risk unnecessarily.

## How do I make a statement?

Your case officer will contact you and arrange a time to talk to you on the phone. Or they may arrange to meet with you in person. We can make sure you feel comfortable about doing this,

and you can choose to have someone with you (as long as they are not involved in what happened).

The case officer will ask you some questions about what happened. This usually takes around an hour or so, but this can depend on how much information we need to ask you for. We may need to talk to you more than once.

They may ask for pieces of evidence – such as documents or receipts – so please keep any evidence you may have about what happened.

### For pharmacy professionals

**Sometimes pharmacy professionals feel guilty about giving evidence about a friend or colleague. Our standards explain clearly that you have a duty to speak up about concerns to help protect people who receive care.**

**This includes raising and reporting any concerns you have about the people you come into contact with during your work. This could be pharmacy staff, other healthcare professionals or people responsible for the care of a patient – such as carers, care home staff or key workers. It includes concerns about behaviours, competency, the working environment and any actions that may compromise patient safety.**

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### What will I be asked about?

We need you to tell us everything you can about what happened – so the case officer will ask you questions about what you saw or did.

We may ask you to provide documents to support the information you give us. If you have these when you speak to us, it will help the case officer get a clear picture of what happened. The documents will help us make sure our investigation is fair.

We may also ask if you have any previous convictions or cautions. This is because we need to know about anything that might help the person being investigated, or that might harm the GPhC's case. Very occasionally witnesses have criminal convictions or cautions which are relevant to the case. When this happens, we have to tell the person under investigation about them. If the conviction or caution is not relevant to the case we will not tell anyone about it.

We may ask about your employment history, experience and qualifications – but only if these are relevant to the case.

When we ask you to give a statement it may be some time after the incident. This can make it difficult to remember what happened. However, we don't expect you to remember every detail. We may already have evidence that dates from when the incident took place, including any statements you gave to the police or as part of an investigation by the pharmacy or organisation concerned. You will be able to see these to refresh your memory.

### What happens next?

Your case officer will type up your statement and send it to you, with copies of any evidence you have given us. You can make changes to the statement if you don't think it's right. You will need to sign the statement when you are happy that it's accurate, and send it back to us.

Please read through your statement carefully, and clearly mark on the document any changes you want to make. When you are happy with the wording of the statement, please sign it, add the date, and send it back to us. You must do this as soon as you can, so that the investigation is not delayed.

Once we have all the evidence, we send it to the pharmacy professional so they have a chance to respond and give their own explanation.

Once the investigation is finished, your case officer will write a report about the investigation and the evidence. We use this to decide what to do next. We will get in touch to let you know what is happening at this point.



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### How long does it take to investigate a concern?

We aim to finish an investigation as soon as possible. Usually this is within three to nine months of the concern being raised. Sometimes cases can take longer because:

- we have to wait for the outcome of an investigation by someone else – such as another regulator or the police
- there is a criminal trial going on, about the same issue involved in the concern
- we have problems contacting witnesses or finding evidence

### Will I need to do anything else?

Most cases are closed without needing any more information from witnesses. But if we find that the concern is more serious, we may need you to take part in a formal meeting (called a 'hearing').

This means that you will be asked to come to our offices in London, to take part in the hearing. As part of the hearing, you will be asked questions about your statement by an independent panel. This usually takes a morning or an afternoon. Sometimes it takes a whole day.

If we need to ask you to attend a hearing, we will let you know in advance. We can help to make arrangements for you to attend, and cover reasonable costs for your travel and other expenses you may have. Your case officer can give you more information about hearings, if you have any questions.

### Thank you

Without the evidence provided by witnesses, we would not be able to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public effectively. We understand that you may find the process difficult and unfamiliar, but your help is essential and we appreciate it.

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