

Giving evidence at a hearing

This guide explains why we need you to attend a hearing. It tells you what we will ask you to do, and how we can help you give your evidence.

Why do I need to give evidence at a hearing?

If there is a serious concern about whether a pharmacy professional can do their job safely and effectively, it's important to be able to present the evidence at a hearing so a committee can decide what to do to protect patients and the public.

Your statement is an important part of our evidence. So we need to ask you to explain what you have said about what happened and to answer questions about it. This will help the committee to understand what happened, and if there is a risk to other people.

We understand it might be inconvenient or difficult for you to be involved in a hearing. We want to make sure you understand what will happen at the hearing, and that you can give your evidence without unnecessary upset or inconvenience. We have specially trained staff who can help you, called 'witness liaison' staff. One of them will talk to you about how we can support you in giving your evidence. This includes covering reasonable costs for your travel, hotel accommodation (this will be arranged by the GPhC), and other expenses you may have.

How can you help me to give evidence?

There are a number of things we can do to help you give your evidence. For example, we can:

- **arrange a time for you to give evidence which fits around your caring responsibilities**
- **talk to your employer to explain why you may need to be away from work**
- **make adjustments if you have any accessibility needs**
- **ask for a video link so that you can give evidence somewhere else if it is difficult for you to travel to the hearing**
- **give you a tour of the hearings centre so you can see what it's like before you need to give evidence**
- **ask the committee chair to let you give evidence from a separate room**

What happens at a hearing?

Our hearings are held at the GPhC Hearings Centre, 25 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5LQ.

A hearing is a formal meeting held by a panel of three people from the GPhC's fitness to practise committee.

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The committee is made up of a chair, a pharmacy professional and a 'lay' member. They will hear evidence about what happened. The evidence is given by the GPhC's case presenter, and by the person representing the pharmacy professional. Both the GPhC case presenter and the pharmacy professional's representative are usually lawyers. However, sometimes the pharmacy professional will represent themselves.

Other people may also be at the hearing, including:

- a legal adviser – to give information about the law involved in the case
- a clinical adviser – to explain about any medical issues involved in the case
- GPhC staff – to help organise the hearing
- other witnesses
- a shorthand writer – to record what is said

Most hearings are held in public – which means that other people such as family members may attend. If the hearing includes information about the pharmacy professional's health, some or all of it may be held in private and only those involved will be present.

Once they have heard all the evidence from both sides, the fitness to practise panel make a decision about:

- what they think happened, based on the evidence they have heard
- whether this means that the pharmacy professional is a significant risk to patients and the public
- if there is a significant risk, what they will do to make sure that risk is managed – for example, by stopping the pharmacy professional from working in their job

What do I need to do to prepare?

We will try to give you at least 28 days' notice of when you will need to attend the hearing. But it can be difficult to be exact about timings because it depends on how the case progresses.

We will tell you the date, time and place of the hearing, and we can give you information and advice about how to get there. Make sure you plan your journey so that you can get there in good time.

We will send you a copy of your final witness statement before the hearing so you can refresh your memory about what you have said. Please bring your witness statement and any other documents we have sent you to the hearing.

You can bring a carer, friend or family member with you to the hearing. Please let us know if you want to do this, and let us know their name.



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You will need to bring some photo identification with you to the hearing, to prove who you are. If you are bringing a carer, friend or family member to the hearing they will need to bring photo identification too. So please check with them in advance that they have this.

Examples of photo identification are a current UK passport or a new-style driver's licence. Please talk to your case officer beforehand if you are not sure what to bring.

Important: do not show your witness statement to anyone else or discuss your evidence with anyone before the hearing. Talk to your case officer if you have any questions.

Preparing for the hearing

- Have I read through my witness statement?
- Have I planned my journey so I can get to the hearing in good time?
- Have I got my statement with me, and any other documents I have received, to take to the hearing?
- Have I got a piece of photo identification?
- Have I let GPhC staff know if I am bringing a friend or family member with me to the hearing?

What will I need to do on the day?

We will usually ask you to keep one or two full days free to give evidence. It will not take all this time to give your evidence, but we won't know

exactly when we will need you. It depends on how the case progresses.

Most witnesses attend in person. A member of our witness liaison staff will meet you and take you to the witness waiting area. This is near the room where the hearing is taking place.

The pharmacy professional and any members of their team have a separate waiting area, so you will not need to wait with them.

If possible, we will introduce you to our case presenter, who will be presenting the evidence for the GPhC. They may be able to tell you the timings for the day.

When it is your turn to give evidence, the committee coordinator will call you into the hearing room and show you to the witness desk. You will need to swear that you are telling the truth – either on a holy book, or by saying an 'affirmation' statement.

The case presenter may ask you to read out your witness statement and they may ask you questions about it. The pharmacy professional or their representative may also ask you questions about your statement.

The chair of the committee is responsible for managing the hearing fairly. They will make sure that the questions are reasonable and polite.

The committee members may ask you questions at any time. But they will usually do this after the case presenter and the pharmacy professional or their representative have asked their questions.

Once you have given your evidence, you are free to go. Or you can stay and watch the rest of the hearing.

We will let you know what decision the committee has made within two weeks of the end of the hearing.

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