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Dear Sir/Madam

**Phase 1: Draft Report: Review of Audit, Inspection and Regulation – Comments from the General Pharmaceutical Council - Help us shape the scrutiny of your healthcare: Consultation Document.**

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in Great Britain. It is our job 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 welcome the opportunity to respond to The Review of Audit, Inspection and Regulation (AIR) in Wales. As the pharmacy regulator, we have both professional regulatory responsibilities as well as a wider systems regulatory function. Although the consultation document as a whole is of interest to us, we have limited our comments to where we feel our work is directly relevant to the proposals. Given our statutory responsibilities cover regulation across Great Britain, we would be welcome the opportunity to contribute to future discussion and work in this area. Whilst we understand that this review does not look at the regulation of individual health professions per se we feel that the links between the two functions should be considered as part of the review. How Wales' regulatory, audit and inspection bodies work with and share appropriate information with professional regulators (and vice versa) will greatly affect all those involved in protecting, promoting and maintaining the health, safety and wellbeing of the public.

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As Welsh Government and the GPhC both acknowledge, the Francis Inquiry and other healthcare reports and reviews have changed the external context in which we work, as well as public expectations of what regulators and inspectorates can and should be achieving. We also continue to recognise the importance for us in taking account the divergence across GB health systems and the Welsh context in our work.

Against this backdrop we have been developing our strategic plan for 2014-17 and considering how our regulatory approach keeps pace with a rapidly changing and complex environment across Great Britain. We have developed a strategy which continues to prioritise the efficient and effective delivery of our core regulatory functions, but also recognises the role we have in using our regulatory levers to promote improvement in pharmacy. Over the next three years we will be focusing on four key themes;

1. proactive good quality regulatory services
2. putting people at the heart of what we do as a regulator
3. using the knowledge gained from our regulatory services and from our work with others to promote improvement in the quality of pharmacy care and services
4. promoting a culture of patient centre professionalism in pharmacy

We are one part of a complex system in each country in Great Britain for overseeing and improving the quality of pharmacy care and services. In all areas of our work we understand that effective joint working with partner organisations and other regulators is essential.

The GPhC wishes to build and use intelligence networks and effective operational partnerships with other regulators throughout Great Britain to identify and tackle risk, to minimise regulatory burdens and identify possible gaps to ensure patient protection. We also want to use the data and information we capture from our inspections of registered pharmacies and other regulatory functions to help inform and drive continuous improvement at a national and local level.

We therefore welcome proposals in the consultation document to strengthen intelligence gathering and sharing mechanisms with other bodies and to develop closer working across other scrutiny agencies. We would wish to play our part in future arrangements of this nature and to further develop and formalise collaborative working arrangements with Local Health Boards and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales in particular.

We wholly agree with the report where it states that “AIR bodies must demonstrate their capacity for collaboration with each other on relevant issues, in the interests of greater local impact, greater cost effectiveness and to reduce the burden on those being reviewed. This collaboration should extend, where appropriate, as a matter of course rather than exception, towards sharing a focus for reviews, integrated working and joined up judgements. Organisational arrangements that support coordination will be promoted.” We would once again like to re-iterate that we and other regulators with a UK or GB wide responsibility have a key role in helping you achieve your stated aims as do the many thousands of professionals that we register and regulate in Wales. The role of the professionals and the professional regulators in achieving high quality outcomes must be a key consideration in this work.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this in more detail around phase 2 of the review. If you would like further information on the points raised in this response, or any other aspects of the GPhC’s work please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provided below.

Yours sincerely

Darren Hughes  
Director for Wales