

Freedom to Speak UP Review  
Recommendations: 2N09  
Quarry House  
Quarry Hill  
Leeds  
LS2 7UE  
Email to: HRDlistening@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

**Consultation on the implementation of the recommendations, principles and actions set out in the report of the Freedom to Speak Up review**

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 support the powerful and compelling messages that are in the Freedom to Speak Up report and agree that whether in the managed sector or not, the culture within organisations must enable registered professionals and other staff to speak up. Organisations must equally demonstrate a real willingness to listen and a commitment to improving by learning from what they hear.

We committed to using the learning from the recent reports and the inquiries into failures in care, and adopting the principles of this report across the work we do.

We believe that professionalism provides the best protection for patients and encourages quality in pharmacy, and that the environment in which they work must support and enable this professionalism to flourish. Part of demonstrating professionalism is the ability for the individual to raise concerns without fear where they have these, and for their employer to listen to these, and act on them where appropriate.

We take a consistent approach to regulation of individuals and the 'system' regulation to maximise impact on culture. The work we are doing in these areas is set out below.

**Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians**

Our core standards of conduct, ethics and performance make clear that every pharmacy professional has a duty to raise any concerns about individuals, actions or circumstances that may be unacceptable and that could result in risks to patient and public safety. We have published guidance about raising concerns, which also highlights the work of Public Concern at Work, and provides

information about the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA). The GPhC is a prescribed person under the Act.

We are currently reviewing our core standards and to inform this work we launched a national conversation about patient centred professionalism in pharmacy in April 2015. This work also explores the barriers and enablers to demonstrating professionalism.

Alongside other healthcare regulators the GPhC published a joint statement on the professional duty of candour which makes clear to our registrants the importance of raising concerns and being candid.

In addition, our recently published hearings and sanctions guidance, which is intended to assist fitness to practise committees in making proportionate decisions, now includes a section about raising concerns and the duty of candour.

### **Registered Pharmacies**

Registered pharmacies must be registered with the GPhC in order to operate lawfully. We set standards for registered pharmacies and, through our inspections of registered pharmacies, seek assurance that these standards are met.

Whilst the law does not provide for a fit and proper person requirement for the pharmacy owner or superintendent pharmacists of registered pharmacies, we require similar declarations to those of the fit and proper person to be made at the time of registration for both registrants and owners of registered pharmacies.

We believe the role of the Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardian is an important step in enabling staff to speak up and raise concerns. The principles in relation to the FTSU guardian do not apply to registered pharmacies as these sit outside NHS Trust structures. Therefore, as we have understood the proposals there would be no requirement for registered pharmacies to have freedom to speak up guardians in place.

A culture of openness, honesty and learning within the environments in which pharmacy services are provided, as well as being able to raise concerns, is critical in making sure that patients receive safe and effective care. It is essential that any concerns about the safety of service provision can be raised without fear and that these concerns are dealt with effectively and learnt from. These important themes are prominent in our standards for registered pharmacies.

Whilst we have a number of initiatives in place, we must be constantly vigilant that the necessary improvements in culture happen. We will continue to work with the pharmacy sector and Public Concern at Work, to reflect on how we can make sure that pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and the wider pharmacy team are empowered to raise concerns where they have these.

I hope the above information is of assistance. If you would like further information or clarification about any aspects of the GPhC's work please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duncan Rudkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'n'.

Duncan Rudkin  
Chief Executive and Registrar