

Huw Yardley
Committee Clerk
Health Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

3 September 2015

Dear Mr Yardley

Written submission from the General Pharmaceutical Council to the Primary Care inquiry

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Health Committee's inquiry into primary care.

The 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 the services of pharmacy professionals and pharmacies.

In the past year ministers across Great Britain have made clear their support for developing the full potential of pharmacy in order to meet the challenges faced by primary care now and in the future. This includes the recent announcements that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in community pharmacies in England will have greater access to patient records and that funding from the primary care infrastructure fund would be used to employ pharmacists in GP practices in England to help GPs deliver a seven-day-a-week service. These and other developments bring opportunities to improve primary care services for patients but also bring risks which need to be managed appropriately.

Our position as the regulator for both pharmacy professionals and registered pharmacies means we have a key role to play in ensuring that patients and the public receive the quality and standards of care that they expect and that the pharmacy team have the skills and training necessary to meet those expectations. And we need to be responsive to changes in the way pharmacy services are delivered and the greater responsibilities that pharmacy will have in delivering primary care services in the future.

We believe that enabling pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to act professionally, in the best interests of patients, provides the best protection for patients and encourages quality in pharmacy. The environment in which they work must support and enable a culture of patient-centred professionalism. We are therefore working to embed patient-centred professionalism in all of the standards which pharmacy professionals and pharmacies are required to meet. We also support and contribute actively to the work of the Rebalancing Programme Board which advises ministers on the review of pharmacy legislation and regulation. The work of the Board is critical in ensuring that the legal framework around pharmacy practice enables rather than blocks essential developments in culture and practice.

We have begun a review of the core standards for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians with a [national conversation](#) with the public and pharmacy professionals about what they would expect from a pharmacy professional who was patient-centred and acting professionally. What we have heard will inform the development of the new standards, which will be published next year.

We are also making significant changes to how we regulate pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, including by developing a framework to provide assurance to the public that those who are on our registers remain up to date and continue to meet these standards throughout their careers.

Our work to overhaul the way we inspect registered pharmacies is another example of how we are working to make sure that patients and the public receive high quality care. We are reviewing our inspection model to ensure it is proportionate, patient-centred and focussed on outcomes. This means we are better placed to assure patients about standards and services in a world when pharmacy is changing rapidly.

Another priority for the GPhC is to review the standards of initial education and training of the pharmacy team to make sure that pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff will have the skills and abilities needed to deal with the new challenges they face as they take on greater roles in primary care.

We recently published a [discussion paper](#) which analyses the policies for health, pharmacy and pharmacy education provision in each of the countries of Great Britain and draws preliminary conclusions about what the policies may mean for the future roles of the pharmacy team and the education and training they will need to fulfil those roles. The feedback we have received from pharmacy professionals, pharmacy students and trainees, employers and education providers and patients and the public will help to review the standards of initial education and training for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff. The GPhC then plans to consult on new draft standards in 2016 and publish revised standards in 2017.

We hope the information provided above will be useful for the Health Committee's inquiry and are happy to provide any further information and to contribute to future discussions about primary care in England.

Yours sincerely



Duncan Rudkin
Chief Executive
Tel: 0203 713 7811
Email: duncan.rudkin@pharmacyregulation.org