

Welcome to Update



Welcome to the third edition of our Regulatory Update in 2023.

In this edition we highlight the Code consultation and how you can ensure your opinion is heard on this important issue.

We report on the October AGM and the President's keynote address.

We highlight the closure of the COVID-19 Temporary Register in March 2024.

We ask for your help in our review of Raising Concerns and the Duty of Candour. We thank you for your great response to the Knowledge of English consultation and highlight the upcoming Council meeting on Tuesday 05 December 2023.

Lastly, we report on news you may have missed

What's inside

- P 2 [Your Voice Matters. The Code consultation.](#)
- P 3 [The President's address at the 98th Annual General Meeting.](#)
- P 5 [COVID-19 Temporary Register to close in March 2024.](#)
- P 6 [Review on Raising Concerns and the Duty of Candour. Thank you for your response to Knowledge of English consultation. Upcoming Council meeting.](#)
- P7 [News you may have missed.](#)



Review previous editions

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Your Voice Matters: The Code Consultation



The Pharmaceutical Society NI has launched a consultation to seek views on the draft Code of Professional standards of conduct, ethics and performance for pharmacists in Northern Ireland which will replace the 2016 Code.

The primary responsibility of the Pharmaceutical Society NI is to regulate the pharmacy profession to ensure the health and safety of the public. We do this by ensuring that registered pharmacists in Northern Ireland are fit to practise, keep their skills and knowledge up to date and deliver high quality safe care to patients.

The Code of Conduct is the single-most important document the Pharmaceutical Society of NI produces. It sets out the professional standards, behaviour and conduct the public can expect from a pharmacist when accessing pharmaceutical care. It underpins the regulatory functions of the organisation and is intended to guide and support pharmacy registrants in their practice area, professional development and decision-making processes.”

In the proposed Code, we have taken a different approach from the previous Code. In the proposed Code we ask that pharmacists give an affirmation to provide safe, effective, and compassionate care by abiding by seven Standards. For each of the seven Standards we have listed behaviours which pharmacists must demonstrate to meet these Standards.

Much of the content of the Code is unchanged as the fundamental principles of good patient care remain as relevant today as they did in the past. However, the emphasis and language used in the Code has changed. We have tried to make the Code more accessible and relevant to both the profession and the public with clear and unambiguous Standards which are applicable to all areas of pharmacy practice.

Following an initial call for evidence and discussions with stakeholders to update the current Code we are now seeking your views on the results of this work.

We would therefore encourage feedback from patients and the public, pharmacy registrants and potential registrants, employers, professional and representative bodies, and other stakeholders who may have an interest in pharmaceutical care.

The consultation will run from **23 October 2023 to 18 December 2023**.

All responses to this consultation should be sent to consultations@psni.org.uk and will be considered by the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

The Code Consultation papers can be accessed [here](#).

President's Address at the 98th AGM



The 98th Annual General meeting of the Pharmaceutical Society NI hosted by the Pharmacy Forum was held on 2 October 2023 at Society House and online. The well attended meeting heard from the President of the Council, Dr. Geraldine O'Hare who officially launched the [Society's Annual Report for 2022-2023](#) or by contacting Mark Neale, Director of Public Affairs on mark.neale@psni.org.uk

In her keynote address, Geraldine paid tribute to Dr. Jim Livingstone whose 8-year tenure as President ended in September 2022, and Trevor Patterson, who retired as Chief Executive in December 2022 after

15 years of service.

She warmly welcomed Michaela McAleer, the new Chief Executive, who joined the organisation in December 2022. With 20 years of public sector experience, Michaela has already brought fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to the organisation in her first 10 months.

The President was pleased to report that the organisation had met all 18 Standards of Good Regulation in the annual Performance Review by the Professional Standards Authority. She thanked staff for their dedication and hard work of all staff members and looks forward to building on this success in the coming year.

Geraldine commented that this reporting year has again been another challenging year for pharmacists, healthcare professionals and all those working in the health and social care system. The health system continues to work through the impact of the pandemic and staffing pressures, whilst it makes the changes necessary to address many of the issues revealed by the stresses of the pandemic and to meet increasing public demands. In this changing environment, pharmacy services have become even more critical to the health of the public in all areas where pharmacists work. Pharmacists within the community and in hospitals are increasingly taking on a clinical role with an increasing number becoming independent prescribers with 826 on the Register in September 2023.

The President reported that the Society is continuing to work with colleagues and stakeholders on progressing the necessary changes to fully enable the completion of the Integrated Pharmacy Education and Training programme of work, leading to all pharmacists joining the Register as Independent Prescribers on completion of their Foundation Training Year from 2026. She applauded all the work that is taking place and the commitment of the pharmacy leadership across Northern Ireland for their drive in realising the vision and opportunities that this work presents for the future of pharmacists and our new generation of pharmacists. She specifically recognized the Society's collaboration with the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Cathy Harrison, over the past year, and applauded Cathy's passion for the professional development of pharmacists.

Geraldine expressed her gratitude to the pharmacists on the Covid-19 Temporary Register for their essential services during the pandemic. As the register is set to close on 31 March 2024, she encouraged them to apply for full registration with the Pharmaceutical Society NI to continue their invaluable work for the community.

President's Speech at the 98th AGM

The President reported that this reporting period marked the first full year of the Foundation Year Training programme by NICPLD and the inaugural UK-wide Common Registration Assessment, jointly run by the General Pharmaceutical Council and the Pharmaceutical Society NI. The pass rate for local candidates rose from 83.5% in June 2022 to 93% in June 2023, reflecting the high standard of training. The Society promptly registered successful applicants while upholding stringent standards. .

Efforts are ongoing to register and regulate Pharmacy Technicians in Northern Ireland by 2024, although legislative delays due to the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive could impact progress.

The President reported that the pandemic and governmental delays have affected progress against the Corporate Strategy 2017-2022, leading to its extension and amendment of objectives. The Annual Report 2022-23 documents progress against these revised goals. Work ongoing for 2023/24 includes new regulations regarding English proficiency for registration and a review of the Code. We will be driving forward a programme of work to review and refresh our standards, focusing initially on our Guidance on Internet Pharmacies and on Independent Prescribing.

The President highlighted an ongoing modernisation programme within the Society, focusing on increased use of technology and engagement. These developments aim to provide greater assurance around the cost-effective, efficient, and proportionate performance of our regulatory functions in meeting our overarching objective of public protection.

A new Corporate Strategy for 2024-2028 is being developed, with a theme of transformation and modernisation. This aligns with the broader reform of healthcare professional regulation in the UK, aiming for a more flexible, efficient system.

The President commented that as the Society's centenary in 2025 approaches, planning has begun to mark this significant event and she would welcome input from the public and all members of the pharmacy family into how to mark this significant event.

The President took the opportunity to renew her commitment to, *"continue to drive and support the high standards of regulation across pharmacy, drive innovation and creativity, to modernise the Society, but most importantly, to develop partnerships and effective, respectful relationships across the board to maximize opportunities to work together in our collective vision to protect the public. As the famous quote that we all know goes, "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together." Let's go together and support each other in the important and critical work that our registrants do in delivering excellent healthcare to our communities across Northern Ireland"*.

In conclusion, the President once again expressed her gratitude to pharmacists for their relentless work and professionalism in safeguarding the communities of Northern Ireland. .

The full text of Geraldine's address can be accessed [here](#).

COVID-19 Temporary Register to Close in March 2024

The Covid-19 Temporary Register, opened in April 2020 under the Coronavirus Act 2020. This enabled the Pharmaceutical Society NI to temporarily register persons, in good standing, who had withdrawn from the register within the last three years. The purpose of the COVID-19 Temporary Register was to provide the maximum support possible to the pharmacy workforce and the health and social care system in unprecedented circumstances.

In the initial phase on 3 April 2020, the Pharmaceutical Society NI added 265 pharmacists to the Covid-19 Temporary Register, giving individuals the choice to opt-out if they wished. As of August 2023, 245 pharmacists remain on the temporary register. .

The Department of Health and Social Care in Great Britain and the Department of Health NI have informed health profession regulators that the conditions warranting the continuation of all Covid-19 healthcare Temporary Registers will no longer apply after the upcoming winter. Consequently, the Department of Health NI has requested a six-month notice period for the closure of our Covid-19 Temporary Register by 31 March 2024. This provides registrants practicing under emergency registration a grace period of six months to apply for full registration if they wish to continue practicing.

Pharmacists who remain on the Covid-19 Temporary Register and do not apply to join the Register, will not be able to practice in Northern Ireland after the 31 March 2024 at which point the temporary registration will be closed automatically.

Commenting on the announcement Michaela McAleer, the Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Society NI stated:

"I want to take this opportunity to thank pharmacists on the Covid-19 Temporary Register who supported our pharmacy services and provided vital health care to the public during such unprecedented circumstances."

"I would encourage all pharmacists on the Covid-19 Temporary Register to apply for full registration with the Pharmaceutical Society NI to enable them to continue to provide this vital care and support to our community."

The registration page can be accessed [here](#).

Newsletter Feedback

As always, we welcome your feedback on this Newsletter to make it as effective as possible. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please contact:

Simon McClenahan

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Review on Raising Concerns and the Duty of Candour

On 4 September 2023, following events in England, we issued notification of an internal review of the Code provisions and Guidance that relate to raising concerns, the protection of whistle-blowers and the duty of candour by pharmacists with a view to amending this or strengthening it where necessary.

Pharmacists, other health professionals and the public were reminded that our Code (Professional standards of conduct, ethics and performance for pharmacists in Northern Ireland) and our [Raising Concerns \(Whistleblowing\) Guidance](#) sets out what we expect from pharmacists and pharmacy owners and highlights the protection for pharmacists and others raising concerns. Concerns can be raised with us through the raising concerns link on our website, by telephone or post.

The [proposal for the new Code](#) including proposals on good practice on how to 'Raise concerns when things go wrong and deal appropriately with any concerns raised', has now been released for consultation. We would welcome engagement with stakeholders on how we should ensure that our guidance continues to protect patients and support pharmacists and others in raising matters of concern.

Our Standards and Policy team can be contacted on info@psni.org.uk, by telephone or post.

Knowledge of English Consultation

The Pharmaceutical Society NI thanks all respondents for their helpful and insightful comments to the Consultation on Knowledge of English Regulations and associated Guidance which closed on the 10 October 2023.

Your comments will be brought to the Council on the 5 December for consideration .

Upcoming Council Meeting

The next public Council meeting will take place on Tuesday 05 December 2023 at 73 University Street, commencing promptly at 09:30 am. Council meetings are open to the public, except in exceptional circumstances.

Council agenda and key papers are available before Council Meetings from [here](#).

Should you wish to attend, please contact the Council Secretary, Zulema Horner (Zulema.horner@psni.org.uk), at least one working day in advance of the meeting, advising of your attendance and stating any particular access requirements you may have.

The latest approved Council minutes from the meeting of 09 May 2023 can be found [here](#) and a full list of all Council minutes can be found [here](#).

News you may have missed

17 October 2023 [Pharmacist Technician Day](#)

25 September 2023 [International Pharmacist Day 2023 – Pharmacy strengthening health systems](#)

17 September 2023 [World Patient Safety Day – ‘Engaging Patients for Patient Safety](#)

28 July 2023 [The Chief Executive comments on the June 2023 Common Registration Assessment Results](#)