

Consultation: Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists in Northern Ireland

**Consultation Period
07 August – 02 October 2025**

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact us at Pharmaceutical Society NI, 73 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HL. Telephone number (028) 90326927 or by email to Consultations@psni.org.uk and we will assist you.

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Foreword

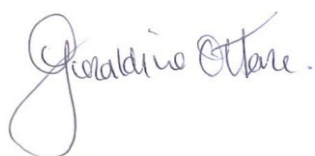
The Pharmaceutical Society Northern Ireland (the Society) presents this public consultation document on proposals to set Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

This is an exciting and innovative opportunity for us to work collectively to strengthen pharmacy governance in setting Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists in Northern Ireland. Whilst based on General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) Standards set in other areas of the United Kingdom, this consultation will enable us to ensure that the Professional Standards which we set here in Northern Ireland are robust, fit-for-purpose and in line with best practice to support local implementation.

The core aims of this consultation are to elicit the views of key stakeholders, including from within the health and social care system in Northern Ireland, the general public and other representative bodies, on the proposed Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists and to find out if there are any perceived issues, or if there is anything else we should have included, to address specific needs locally and regionally across Northern Ireland.

We are committed to listening to your views and providing you with an opportunity to shape the Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists in Northern Ireland to ensure they support the pharmacy profession now and in the future. We welcome your engagement with this consultation process and invite you to share your insights.

Thank you for taking the time to read through our consultation document. We look forward to receiving your feedback and working together to achieve our shared goals.



Dr Geraldine O'Hare
President



Canice Ward
Chief Executive Officer

1. About this Consultation

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (the Society) is the regulatory body for pharmacists and pharmacy premises in Northern Ireland.

Our primary purpose is to ensure that pharmacists are fit to practise and deliver high quality safe care to patients.

It is the organisation's responsibility under The Pharmacy (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to protect and maintain public safety in pharmacy by:

- setting and promoting standards for pharmacists' admission to the register and for remaining on the register;
- maintaining a publicly accessible register of pharmacists and pharmacy premises;
- investigating concerns about the fitness to practise of pharmacists and taking action to protect the public;
- ensuring high standards of education and training for pharmacists in Northern Ireland; and,
- providing vital professional leadership functions through the Pharmacy Forum NI.

As part of our role, we welcome this opportunity to conduct a public consultation on Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

2. Background

Following recent legislation, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and the Pharmaceutical Society NI are working to strengthen pharmacy governance.

The Society now has powers that allow us to:

- develop regulations setting out the essential roles and responsibilities of Responsible Pharmacists; and,

- set Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists, Superintendent Pharmacists and Responsible Pharmacists.

The first stage of this work is to develop Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists. The second stage, to produce Regulations and Standards for Responsible Pharmacists and Standards for Superintendent Pharmacists, will commence in 2025/2026.

3. The Legislation

The Pharmacy (Preparation and Dispensing Errors – Hospital and Other Pharmacy Services) Order 2022 came into force on 1 December 2022. The purpose of this Order is to remove the threat of criminal penalties for accidental or unintentional preparation and dispensing errors by pharmacy staff working in hospitals and similar settings.

Under the 1968 Medicines Act, there are already ‘defences’ that pharmacy professionals can use, if they are responsible for an inadvertent preparation or dispensing error.

Since 2018, pharmacy staff working in registered pharmacies have been able to use these defences. The Order now includes pharmacy staff working in certain other pharmacy settings, such as hospitals, care homes, Area Integrated Partnership Boards, mental health facilities, prisons and places where people are lawfully detained.¹ This will:

- lead to consistency across the pharmacy sector;
- encourage people to report preparation and dispensing errors; and,
- mean that there is more ‘shared learning’ from errors, which will improve patient safety.

¹ A comprehensive list of eligible settings can be found in Section 67F of the Medicines Act 1968: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/67/section/67F?view=extent>

To benefit from the defences in the Order, the hospital (or other pharmacy setting listed in the Order) must have a Chief Pharmacist (or equivalent) in post; this must be a registered pharmacist with the appropriate skills, training and experience. Under the Order, the Pharmaceutical Society NI can set Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists. If an organisation chooses to have a Chief Pharmacist (or equivalent) in post, the postholder must meet the Standards set out in this document.

4. The Standards

The Draft Standards set out the professional responsibilities of a Chief Pharmacist in Northern Ireland; the Standards also describe the knowledge a Chief Pharmacist must have, as well as the conduct and performance expected if this person is to support the organisation and its staff to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services, including preparing and dispensing medicines.

The Standards set out what Chief Pharmacists must do if pharmacy staff are to benefit from the defences. Each standard includes examples of how it can be met in practice.

The four Standards are:

Standard 1:	Provide strategic and professional leadership;
Standard 2:	Develop a workforce with the right skills, knowledge and experience;
Standard 3:	Delegate responsibly and make sure there are clear lines of accountability; and
Standard 4:	Maintain and strengthen governance to ensure safe and effective delivery of pharmacy services.

The core aims of this consultation are:

- to elicit the views of key stakeholders, including those from within the health and social care system in Northern Ireland, the general public and other representative bodies, on the proposed Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists; and;
- to find out if there are any perceived issues, or if there is anything else we should have included, to address specific needs locally and regionally across Northern Ireland.

5. The Consultation Process

The consultation opened on 07 August 2025 and will close on 02 October 2025, giving potential respondents an eight-week period to make a submission.

During this time, we welcome feedback from individuals and organisations. We will send this document to a range of stakeholders, including Chief Pharmacists, pharmacy professionals, pharmacy owners, patients' representative bodies and other people/organisations with an interest in this area. We will also make all consultation documents available on our website: www.psnri.org.uk.

After the consultation has closed, we will publish a report summarising what we heard.

6. Why We Consult

Under Article 11A of the Pharmacy (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended), legally we have to consult before we set any Standards or requirements. We will also consult, when we need to, to make sure we are carrying out our statutory duties effectively and proportionately to meet our main objective of protecting the public.

7. Our Report on this Consultation

Once the consultation period ends, we will analyse the responses we receive and consider any changes that are needed.

Our governing Council will receive the analysis at a meeting in November 2025 and will consider the responses when approving the final Standards for Chief Pharmacists.

We will publish our analysis of the responses and an explanation of the decisions we take. You will be able to see this on our website: www.psni.org.uk.

8. How to Respond

As noted, this consultation will remain open for **8 weeks from 07 August to 02 October 2025**.

The Council of the Pharmaceutical Society NI must consider the views of stakeholders with an interest in the pharmacy profession. During the period of the consultation, we would therefore welcome feedback from individuals and organisations and have listed some questions below to assist.

To help us analyse responses, we would strongly encourage you to complete the response template provided, giving the reason for your answer. We would welcome your response to assist the Council with its decisions.

We have published the consultation documents on our website: <http://www.psni.org.uk/publications/consultations/>

We encourage you to complete the consultation response [online](#) or return the questionnaire either by email to Consultations@psni.org.uk or by post.

Consultation: Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists in NI (2025)
Pharmaceutical Society Northern Ireland
73 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1HL

If you wish your response to remain confidential, please tick the relevant box in the consultation response. We will generally respect this request, however, the information you provide may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, 2000.

Following the consultation, we will consider all responses and publish a report summarising our findings. The Council will consider this report before finalising its decisions.

Accessibility of Information

If you are having difficulties accessing the documentation, or you need us to make adjustments in order to be able to respond to this consultation, please contact our team at Consultations@psni.org.uk.

9. Conclusion

We would like to thank you for taking time to read through our consultation document. Please complete the consultation questions and ensure that your submission is with us as outlined by 02 October 2025.

10. Consultation Questions

We welcome any views you may wish to share in response to the questions outlined below. It is important that you provide reasons for your comments to enable us to better understand the rationale for your views.

We have provided an online SmartSurvey response template for you to complete, which is available using the following link: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ZYC74O/>. If you prefer to complete a paper copy of the questionnaire, a Word version can be downloaded from our website or can be downloaded from the [Consultations page](#) of our website.

Consultation: Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists in Northern Ireland (2025)

All details about these proposals can be found in this consultation document, along with the Equality Impact Assessment and Regulatory Impact Assessment, all of which are on the [Consultations](#) section of our website.

Please note that **you have until 2 October 2025 to complete this questionnaire.**

All data will be held confidentially and will only be used for the purposes of collating responses to this specific consultation, however, should a Freedom of Information request (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000) be received, we may be obliged to share certain information, but at no point will we identify individuals or publish any identifying characteristics.

Your data will be stored in accordance with the Society's data protection statement and policies which can be found at: [Data Protection – Pharmaceutical Society NI.](#)

For any other queries, or should you wish to remove your data, please contact the Pharmaceutical Society NI at consultations@psni.org.uk.

If you require further information, are having difficulties accessing the documentation, or you need us to make adjustments in order to be able to respond to this consultation, please contact our team at consultations@psni.org.uk, telephone 02890 326927, or post your queries to:

Consultation: Professional Standards for Chief Pharmacists

in Northern Ireland (2025)

Pharmaceutical Society NI

73 University Street

Belfast

BT7 1HL

Part 1 General Information About Respondents

Q1. Can you please complete the following:

[PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOXES PROVIDED AND THEN GO TO Q2]

Name:	
Role/Job Title:	
Organisation:	
Address (Optional):	
E-mail :	
Contact Telephone Number:	

Q2. Can we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation? If yes, please ensure you have provided an e-mail address or contact telephone number at Q1. **[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]**

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q3</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q3</i>

Q3. Are you responding as? **[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]**

An individual	1	<i>Please go to Q4</i>
An organisation	2	<i>Please go to Q6</i>

Q4. If you are responding as an individual which describes you BEST?

[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]

Pharmacist	1	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Pharmacy student	2	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Trainee pharmacist	3	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Community pharmacy owner	4	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Member of the public	5	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Other healthcare professional	6	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Other	7	<i>Please go to Q5</i>

Q5. Please Specify 'Other':

[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q8]

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Q6. If you are responding as an organisation, which of the following **BEST** describes your organisation? **[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]**

Pharmacy representative body	1	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Body representing patients or the public	2	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Government department	3	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
HSC organisation	4	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
University/Education Body	5	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Regulatory body	6	<i>Please go to Q8</i>
Other	7	<i>Please go to Q7</i>

Q7. Please Specify 'Other': **[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q8]**

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Q8. In the interests of transparency, we will publish a summary of responses and list the names of all respondents.

We may also include quotes from respondents. When we quote an individual, we will not publish or link the quote to their name. If you do not wish all or part of your response, including your name, to be made public, please indicate this clearly below.

If you wish your response to be kept confidential, the Pharmaceutical Society NI will endeavor to respect that request. However, you should be aware that the information you provide may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q9</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q9</i>

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q10</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q10</i>

We have set out four standards for Chief Pharmacists, namely:

- Q10.** Do you think the Standards will strengthen and maintain pharmacy governance in the interests of patient safety? **[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]**

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q12</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q11</i>
Don't know	3	<i>Please go to Q12</i>

[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q12]

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- Q12.** Do you think the Standards will provide a governance framework which will support staff to report preparation and dispensing errors?

[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q14</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q13</i>
Don't know	3	<i>Please go to Q14</i>

- Q13.** Please explain why you answered no.

[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q14]

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- Q14.** Do you think the Standards will provide a governance framework which will support staff to learn from dispensing errors?

[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q16</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q15</i>
Don't know	3	<i>Please go to Q16</i>

- Q15.** Please explain why you answered no.

[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q16]

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- Q16.** The Chief Pharmacist has a key role in making sure that pharmacy staff can benefit from the defences for 'inadvertent' (accidental or unintentional) preparation and dispensing errors. Thinking about this role, are there any other standards for Chief Pharmacists that you think are missing?

[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q17</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q18</i>
Don't know	3	<i>Please go to Q18</i>

Q17. What are the other Standards that you think should be included?

[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q18]

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Q18. We have developed the Standards to apply to Chief Pharmacists, whatever setting they work in. Are there any settings where you think these Standards could not be applied or met? **[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]**

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q19</i>
No	2	<i>Please go to Q20</i>
Don't know	3	<i>Please go to Q20</i>

Q19. Please describe the settings where you think these standards could not be applied or met. **[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q20]**

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Equality Impact of Proposals

Q20. Do any aspects of the proposals have equality implications for groups or individuals based on one or more of the following categories?

- Age;
- Gender;
- Religion or belief;
- Marital Status/Civil Partnerships;
- Sexual orientation;
- Political opinion;
- People with/without dependents;
- Disability; and,
- Race / ethnicity.

Please identify which group(s) may be adversely affected and the reason for this and the details of the impact.

[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q21]

Impact on other groups

We also want to know if our proposals will have an impact on other individuals or groups (not related to protected characteristics) specifically, patients and the public, Chief Pharmacists, pharmacy owners or employers, pharmacy staff, other healthcare professionals, pharmacist and pharmacy technician students and trainees.

Q21. Do you think our proposals will have a positive or negative impact on any of these groups?

[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE FOR EACH CATEGORY AND GO TO Q22]

Patients and the public	Positive impact	Negative impact	Positive and negative impact	No impact	Don't know
Chief Pharmacists	Positive impact	Negative impact	Positive and negative impact	No impact	Don't know
Pharmacy owners/employers	Positive impact	Negative impact	Positive and negative impact	No impact	Don't know
Pharmacy staff	Positive impact	Negative impact	Positive and negative impact	No impact	Don't know
Other healthcare professionals	Positive impact	Negative impact	Positive and negative impact	No impact	Don't know
Pharmacist/pharmacy technician students/trainees	Positive impact	Negative impact	Positive and negative impact	No impact	Don't know

Q22. Please describe the impact you think our proposals will have and the individuals or groups concerned. **[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX AND THEN GO TO Q23]**

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Q23. Do you have any other comments related to the Chief Pharmacist Standards that you would like to make? **[PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ONLY]**

Yes	1	<i>Please go to Q24</i>
No	2	<i>The End</i>
Don't know	3	<i>The End</i>

Q24. Please comment.

[PLEASE WRITE IN BOX – THERE ARE NO FURTHER QUESTIONS]

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END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for completing this consultation questionnaire. Online submissions made via [this link](#) will reach us automatically. Anyone wishing to complete the form in Word/PDF format should email their submission to:

Consultations@psni.org.uk or post paper copies to:

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Please note that your completed form should arrive with us no later than

02 October 2025