

**STATUTORY COMMITTEE OF THE
PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF NORTHERN IRELAND**

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION FOR RESTORATION

In the matter of:	RONALD WALTER MCGLAUGHLIN Previous registration number: 2254 IP
Location:	The meeting was conducted at Society House, 73 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HL
Date:	10 September 2026
Committee:	Mr Gary Potter KC (Chair), Ms Allison Hume (Lay), Dr Mairead McGrattan (Registrant).
In Attendance:	Mr Jonpaul Shields (Barrister), Ms Laura Hughes (Registrar), Mr Ian Black (Solicitor – Pharmaceutical Society NI), Ms Maha Shams (Regulatory Paralegal), Mrs Rosemary McGlaughlin (observing), Mr Vincent Harkin (Witness) and Dr Jenny Millar (Caretaker Secretary to the Statutory Committee).

Issue

In accordance with paragraph 37(7) of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland Regulations (Fitness to Practise and Disqualification) Regulations (NI) 2012 ('the Fitness to Practise and Disqualification Regulations') these are the findings and reasons of the Statutory Committee ('the Committee') on the application of Ronald Walter McGlaughlin ('the Applicant') made pursuant to paragraph 9 of Schedule 3 to the Pharmacy (NI) Order 1976 ('the 1976 Order') to be restored to the Register of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland ('the Society').

Restoration Application and Outcome

On 17 January 2025 the Applicant submitted a Restoration Application to the Society. As set out in The Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (Fitness to Practise and Disqualification) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012, Regulation 18(1), the Secretary to the Statutory Committee gave notice to the Applicant on the 03 August 2026, that the Restoration Hearing would be held. The Restoration Hearing took place on 10 September 2026. The outcome of the Hearing was that the

Applicant was restored to the Register with conditions imposed for a period of 18 months.

Attendance of Applicant

The Applicant attended and confirmed his name. He did not have legal representation. Counsel for the Society was Jonpaul Shields BL.

Preliminary Matters

None.

Background to the Restoration Application

The Statutory Committee of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland convened on 01 May 2015, 11 June 2015 and 20 July 2015 to inquire into the conduct and behaviour of Ronald Walter McGlaughlin. The Committee established the relevant facts, which were largely agreed in any event. The Applicant made admissions to 7 allegations which amounted to misconduct. The Committee also received evidence from Dr Michael Mawhinney, Mr Joe Brogan and Dr Colin Fitzpatrick and from the Applicant himself. The Committee found that the evidence of serious professional misconduct was substantial and that the fitness to practise of the Applicant was impaired. Having considered the issue of sanction, the Committee gave a direction on 20 July 2015 that the Applicant should be removed from the Register.

The 2015 Statutory Committee Hearing Decision

In general terms, the applicant supplied Dalmane, a controlled drug and a medication not authorised for supply on the NHS, to an elderly and vulnerable patient over a period of approximately 5 years without record. This was an inappropriate concurrent supply alongside other medication, namely Zolpidem, that the patient was already prescribed and taking.

Of some note, the Committee, at the fitness to practice stage, struggled to accept that the Applicant had insight and noted that there was no cogent explanation for what happened. The Committee did not believe the standard the Registrant had to meet in relation to demonstrating insight was met by his remorse or his good works in the community.

The Committee found there had been a lack of candour by the Applicant and concealment of his unprofessional conduct over a considerable period. The Committee went on to say -

“This was not an isolated incident - it was a calculated and prolonged course of action in circumstances where the Registrant abdicated his obligation to act professionally for reasons of which we remain unaware.”

The Committee regarded the behaviour as a “deliberate course of action”, there was evidence of concealment, it concerned a vulnerable patient and it created an actual risk of harm. The Committee also found that the Applicant’s behaviour demonstrated a total disregard for professional standards and requirements and there was a risk of repetition.

The Committee identified a number of aggravating and mitigating features and set these out. The Committee then stated -

“This is a case of serious professional misconduct. The Registrant has admitted seven allegations. The factual background has already been set out in our determination of the Registrant's ongoing impairment. The Committee considers that the Registrant's conduct, the reasons for which remain unexplained to the satisfaction of the Committee, was deliberate and calculated. It persisted for a prolonged period of time. It was only by accident that the illicit supply of a controlled drug came to light. It is a matter of grave concern, and no mere idle speculation, as to what might have happened to patient A had she not spoken with a care worker on 16 January 2014. The many good character references submitted on behalf of the Registrant cannot erase the serious misconduct in this case.”

The Committee, accordingly, made the following determination -

“The Committee therefore orders that the Registrant be struck off the register. There is a need to send out a clear message to the profession and to the public that conduct of the type encountered in this case is wholly unacceptable and is contrary to everything the profession stands for.”

APPLICATION FOR RESTORATION HEARING

Decision on the Evidence

1. The Applicant applies to be restored to the Register pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 3 of the Pharmacy (NI) Order 1976. Paragraph 9(4) states,
“An application under this paragraph may not be granted unless the Applicant provides such evidence of Fitness to Practise as the Statutory Committee directs.”
2. Paragraph 9(4) places a persuasive burden on the Applicant for restoration to persuade the Statutory Committee that there is no current impairment.
3. The test to be applied in restoration cases is the same as in fitness to practise proceedings. The test was identified in the case of the GMC v Chandra as follows,

“Is the applicant now fit to practise having regard to the over-arching regulatory objectives?”

Those over-arching regulatory objectives are –

- i) protection of the public
- ii) maintenance of public confidence in the profession, and / or
- iii) maintenance of proper professional standards and conduct for members of the profession.

4. The Committee has considered,
 - a) The conduct that brought the applicant before the original hearing
 - b) Evidence of insight
 - c) The risk of repetition
 - d) What the Applicant has done since the original decision in 2015.
5. The Committee considered the written and oral evidence in assessing whether the Applicant has presented sufficient evidence of insight, and remediation, and assessed the risk of recurrence.
6. The Committee has also given careful consideration to the wider public interest in upholding standards, and maintaining public confidence in the pharmaceutical profession generally, when determining whether the Applicant's fitness to practise is currently impaired.
7. Dealing with the Applicant's conduct that led to his removal in 2015, this behaviour gave rise to fundamental breaches of the Code of Conduct. The original Committee found on the evidence that the Applicant's conduct was deliberate, and involved concealment over a prolonged period of time.
8. The Committee had the benefit of the Applicant's written application for restoration dated 17 January 2025. Whilst the Applicant might have provided more detail in this written document, the Committee did have the benefit of hearing the applicant's sworn evidence during which he was subject to cross-examination and questions from the Committee. At times the Applicant was emotional, and he was clearly ashamed of his actions, particularly when measured against his otherwise unblemished and successful career as a pharmacist during which he had been awarded pharmacist of the year. He said he had difficulty reconciling these two positions. He expressed regret for his actions, and remorse. The Committee assessed his evidence at the Restoration Hearing as being reliable. He came across as an earnest individual who gave detailed evidence about how he has, in the past eleven years, helped people in his church, while conducting voluntary work as a personal trainer, and during his voluntary work with a local pharmacist, Mr

Harkin. He said he had helped people in poverty, with alcohol problems, and younger people.

9. It was clear to the Committee that he had now shown demonstrable insight into his actions, and the impact that they had had on the pharmacy profession and on the public as a whole, and had tried very hard to remediate by contributing positively to members of the public he came across.
10. He said that he was glad that he had got struck off the register, and that decision was entirely appropriate. He said that this gave him the opportunity to look at weaknesses in his character and that he had addressed those.
11. He said that he had to pay back to society what he had done wrong and had undertaken a considerable amount of voluntary and charity work to contribute to the public.
12. He said he regretted everything he had done that led to him being removed, and he wanted to work to address his past behaviour, and try to help as many people as possible. The Committee found his evidence to be truthful and persuasive.
13. In these circumstances the Committee felt that on the Applicant's evidence there was now a very low risk of repetition. The Applicant said he had learned from the regulatory proceedings that he had been involved in due to his own actions, and he did not want that to happen again.
14. The evidence of Mr Harkin, who is the owner of Harkin's Pharmacy, was of considerable assistance to the Committee. He had provided two written statements for the Committee's consideration on 12 February 2025, and 01 September 2026. That evidence was supplemented by Mr Harkin's testimony under oath. With full knowledge of the regulatory findings against the Applicant, and issues giving rise to it, such as, concealment, and the fact that he had engaged in deliberate actions over a period of 5 years, Mr Harkin had nevertheless engaged the Applicant in his pharmacy in a voluntary capacity from 2021 to date. He was a truthful witness. In his oral evidence Mr Harkin said that he was impressed by the fact that the Applicant had proactively contacted him to provide services voluntarily, to try to make amends for his behaviour in 2015. Mr Harkin advised the Committee that if the Applicant was restored to the register he was likely to have a role for the Applicant. Mr Harkin said that he would go the extra mile for the Applicant having engaged him voluntarily in the previous 5 years. He said that the NHS needs all the pharmacists it can get, and without specifically using the words, it was clear to the Committee that the thrust of his evidence was that the restoration of the

Applicant on the register would be in the public interest in that he could provide experienced pharmaceutical services to their local community. Mr Harkin said that he would be prepared to facilitate the supervision of the Applicant, and given what he knew of the Applicant, who in his view had devoted the last five years to redress his behaviour as best he could, to study and to try to change, the Applicant would continue to do so going forward. He said that he would have no problems in facilitating the provision of supervision of the Applicant, given his work with him, and the Applicant's approach to work to date.

15. The Applicant provided a number of testimonials from people he worked with or engaged with in his local community, all of which were supportive.
16. The Applicant also provided a schedule of CPD courses that he had undertaken from February 2022 to May 2024. In his oral testimony the Applicant said that he continued to undertake courses and had completed four this week. Those courses involved addressing sepsis, cellulitis, heart failure and iron in the body issues.
17. The events that led to the original regulatory proceedings took place over eleven years ago now. This is a relevant factor to take into consideration. Nevertheless, the Committee have given careful consideration to that significant misconduct and fundamental breaches of the Code that occurred at that time. It has considered the central importance of the over-arching regulatory objectives in coming to its decision in this restoration case. However, assessing all the evidence at this juncture the Committee considers that the Applicant has shown demonstrable insight and has tried to remediate as best he can in the circumstances. The Committee do not think that there is a risk of recurrence. Given the evidence as presented to the Committee, the Committee do not think that confidence in the profession would be damaged if the Applicant was restored to the register at this time.
18. However, the Committee did consider that the restoration of the Applicant's name to the register should be conditional as outlined in the Schedule of Conditions set out in the final section of this document. The Committee are fully aware of the fact that any conditions imposed must be specific, appropriate, workable and enforceable, and will be imposed to protect the public interest and reinforce the message that standards in the profession must be maintained at all times.
19. The Committee considers that as the Applicant has not worked as a pharmacist for eleven years it would be appropriate, and in the public interest, and would protect the public, if conditions were imposed for a period of 18

months to be reviewed by a Statutory Committee prior to the expiration of the 18 month period.

COSTS

20. The Society sought the costs of dealing with this application and a schedule of costs was served on the Applicant. The Applicant agreed to pay the costs sought. Accordingly the Committee formally ordered the Applicant to pay the Society's cost.

Gary Potter, KC

Chair of the Statutory Committee

10 September 2026

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS:

1. To notify the Fitness to Practise team within the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, before you take on any position for which you must be registered, of the details and hours you will work each week, including locum or referral work, and of contact details of your employer and/or pharmacy owner.
2. To notify the following people, in writing, in relation to any work, whether paid or unpaid, for which registration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland is required, of the restrictions imposed on your pharmacy practice:
 - All employers or contractors
 - Prospective employers or contractors
 - Agents acting on behalf of employers and locum agencies
 - Health and Social Care Trusts
 - Your Accountable Officer for Controlled Drugs
 - Superintendent Pharmacist
 - Responsible Pharmacist
 - Line Manager
 - Workplace supervisor
3. To place yourself and remain under the close supervision of a workplace supervisor who shall be a registered pharmacist, such person to be approved by the Fitness to Practise team within the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland.
4. To nominate a suitable pharmacist to act as your mentor. Such nomination shall be provided to the Fitness to Practise team within the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland within 4 weeks from the date that this Order takes effect.
5. To arrange for your mentor to write to the Fitness to Practise team within the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland to confirm that meetings are taking place, and consent to the mentor reporting any concerns to the Fitness to Practise team within the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, and arrange for your mentor to produce one report prior to the expiration of the period of Conditions, for the benefit of the reviewing Statutory Committee at that time.
6. To work with your mentor to formulate and produce a personal learning and development plan to address your knowledge of current developments in

pharmacy practice within three months from the date that this Order takes effect.

7. Not to work as an Independent Prescriber (IP).