

General
Pharmaceutical
Council

Standards for Chief Pharmacists

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About us

We regulate pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies in Great Britain.

We work to assure and improve standards of care for people using pharmacy services.

What we do

Our role is to protect the public and give them assurance that they will receive safe and effective care when using pharmacy services.

We set standards for pharmacy professionals and pharmacies to enter and remain on our register.

We ask pharmacy professionals and pharmacies for evidence that they are continuing to meet our standards, and this includes inspecting pharmacies.

We act to protect the public and to uphold public confidence in pharmacy if there are concerns about a pharmacy professional or pharmacy on our register.

Through our work we help to promote professionalism, support continuous improvement and assure the quality and safety of pharmacy.



Introduction

The Pharmacy (Preparation and Dispensing Errors – Hospital and Other Pharmacy Services) Order 2022

The aim of this Order is to remove the threat of criminal penalties for inadvertent (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’ pharmacy professionals can use if they are responsible for an accidental or unintentional 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 hospitals and certain other pharmacy settings, such as care homes, some Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), some ambulance trusts, prisons, and other places where people are lawfully detained.

Including these other pharmacy settings 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

If you are not sure whether you or staff within your organisation are able to benefit from the defences, please ask your organisation’s legal team for advice.

The Order gives the GPhC various new powers. One of these is the power to set professional standards for Chief Pharmacists, including a description of their professional responsibilities. By producing new standards, we will clarify the role, responsibilities, and accountability of Chief Pharmacists. In turn this will maintain and strengthen pharmacy governance.

Strengthening governance will create a framework where there is a smaller likelihood of preparation and dispensing errors, and a culture where staff feel able to report any errors and learn from them.

To benefit from the defences set out 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. If an organisation chooses to have a Chief Pharmacist (or equivalent) in post, the postholder must meet the standards set out in this document.

The legislation is ‘enabling’ in its effects, rather than imposing new rules. This means that an organisation can choose not to benefit from the defences, and if so, they will not need to have a Chief Pharmacist (or their equivalent) in post. If that is the case, our standards for Chief Pharmacists will not apply.

We have created the standards so that organisations can meet the new legislation. They are not intended to be a complete description of the scope of a Chief Pharmacist’s role, which can often be different in the independent and NHS systems across England,

Scotland and Wales. However, we encourage organisations to acknowledge and follow the standards as part of good practice and to strengthen pharmacy governance.

Developing these Chief Pharmacist standards is the first part of a programme of work to strengthen pharmacy governance. The programme also includes producing rules and professional standards for Responsible Pharmacists, and professional standards for Superintendent Pharmacists.

The Chief Pharmacist role

Under the 2022 Order, organisations in any of the listed pharmacy settings must have a Chief Pharmacist (or equivalent) in place if they want to benefit from the defences against criminal prosecution in case of an accidental or unintentional preparation or dispensing error.

The postholder must meet our **Standards for Pharmacy Professionals** as well as the standards for Chief Pharmacists. The Standards for Pharmacy Professionals describe how safe and effective care is delivered through 'person-centred' professionalism, and how pharmacy professionals must treat every person as an individual. The new standards for Chief Pharmacists build on those standards, describing the role and responsibilities of Chief Pharmacists as well as setting standards of conduct and performance. Both the Standards for Pharmacy Professionals and those for Chief Pharmacists apply to Chief Pharmacists whatever setting they work in, and even when they do not provide care directly to patients and the public. The attitudes, behaviours, conduct

and practice of Chief Pharmacists can indirectly have an impact on the safe and effective care that patients and the public receive, and on the confidence of members of the public in pharmacy as a whole.

Chief Pharmacists are senior healthcare professionals responsible for providing leadership, expertise, and oversight and management of pharmacy services within an organisation. The role includes:

- planning and allocating resources
- improving productivity
- providing value for money, and
- making sure that pharmacy services meet the needs of the communities they serve and improve health outcomes

The work of a Chief Pharmacist contributes to the safe, high-quality, and effective provision of services in these settings.

It is not necessary to use the title 'Chief Pharmacist'. Other titles, such as Director of Pharmacy, are often used. If a title other than Chief Pharmacist is used, for the organisation to benefit from the defences the job description must meet:

- the description of a Chief Pharmacist's role given in section 67F (4) of the Medicines Act 1968, and
- our requirements in these standards for Chief Pharmacists

Section 67F (4) of The Medicines Act 1968 sets out the role of the Chief Pharmacist (or equivalent) as someone who:



The standards for Chief Pharmacists

- a. *plays a significant role (irrespective of whether other individuals also do so) in:*
 - i. *The making of decisions about how the whole or a substantial part of the activities of the pharmacy service are to be managed or organised, or*
 - ii. *The actual managing or organising of the whole or a substantial part of those activities.*
- b. *Has the authority to make decisions that affect the running of the pharmacy service as far as concerns the sale or supply of medicinal products, and*
- c. *Is responsible for securing that the pharmacy service is carried on safely and effectively.*

The Chief Pharmacist (or equivalent) must meet these requirements if their organisation wants the pharmacy staff to benefit from the defences. We have built upon these requirements in producing the standards for Chief Pharmacists. If a Chief Pharmacist does not meet these standards, we may investigate concerns about their fitness to practise

The standards for Chief Pharmacists set out their professional responsibilities. They also describe the knowledge, conduct and performance required by a Chief Pharmacist to support the organisation and its staff to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services, including preparing and dispensing medicines.

The Chief Pharmacist plays a vital leadership role in making sure pharmacy services are delivered safely and effectively. Chief Pharmacists must meet the following standards:

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

The standards are designed to be 'outcome' focused in acknowledgement of the differing circumstances of pharmacy settings. We do not set out one way of achieving each outcome, instead, we accept that there may be multiple ways of achieving the same outcome. For example, all Chief Pharmacists must develop a workforce with the right skills, knowledge, and experience. The outcome or goal is to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services, but how each Chief Pharmacist will achieve this will be dependent on multiple factors, including the services they deliver, the skills, knowledge and

experience of their existing team, the resources available to them, and so on. Chief Pharmacists should make sure they can show that they are meeting the standards, while considering the requirements of the setting they work in. The standards are also a statement of what patients and other people working with Chief Pharmacists can expect of them.

How to demonstrate that the standards are being met

There are several ways of establishing whether a Chief Pharmacist is meeting the standards:

- during a regulatory inspection discussion
- by referring to the requirements of their role as a Chief Pharmacist when carrying out their revalidation work
- through investigation, if a concern is raised with the regulator:
 - by a member of staff, a patient or a member of the public, or
 - through inspections or other regulatory actions carried out by the Care Quality Commission, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, or Healthcare Inspectorate Wales
- during the regular performance reviews with their line manager

Applying the standards

We have developed the standards to apply to all Chief Pharmacists, whatever setting they work in. Although Chief Pharmacists may not provide care directly to patients and the public, their actions have an impact on the safe and effective care that patients and the public receive, and on the confidence that members of the public have in pharmacy.

Chief Pharmacists are personally accountable for meeting the standards and must be able to justify their conduct and the decisions they make.

Alongside these standards, Chief Pharmacists must also meet the GPhC's standards for pharmacy professionals, which need to be met by all pharmacy professionals. Chief Pharmacists should also follow their organisation's policies and procedures, and meet the requirements of, and follow the advice from, other relevant regulatory bodies and inspectorates, such as the Care Quality Commission, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Wales, and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, as well as any other relevant legislation.

There will be times when Chief Pharmacists are faced with conflicting legal and professional responsibilities. Or they may be faced with complex situations that mean they have to balance competing priorities. The standards for pharmacy professionals and those for Chief Pharmacists provide a framework to help them

when making professional judgements. We expect Chief Pharmacists to consider these standards, their legal duties and any relevant guidance, such as that from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) or other membership bodies, when making decisions, including those covering medicines legislation.

Standard 1: Provide strategic and professional leadership

As leaders, Chief Pharmacists play a central role in setting the strategic direction required to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services. It is part of the role of the Chief Pharmacist to empower and guide pharmacy professionals and the wider workforce in delivering improved outcomes for patients.

Chief Pharmacists must:

- **have a clear vision and strategy to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services across the organisation**
- **lead by example, taking responsibility for their own professional growth and development**
- **be able to influence and work collaboratively with others, to meet the needs of patients and contribute to shared organisational and system objectives**
- **promote research, technology and innovation to enhance safety and improve services**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Chief Pharmacists can meet this standard. It is not meant to be a complete list, and should be used as a prompt and not as a checklist:

- being able to build effective relationships at all levels both inside and outside the organisation, and across organisational boundaries

- building and developing partnership working with stakeholders inside and outside the organisation
- meeting organisational priorities and demonstrating that they are keeping to key organisational policies, such as the Duty of Candour
- making sure staff understand their impact and the wider impact of pharmacy on patients
- being able to solve problems in high-pressure situations
- being able to analyse and interpret complex data and information when making decisions
- demonstrating good decision-making skills that positively affect how pharmacy services are delivered
- being able to adapt and innovate to meet the changing needs of patients and changes to how pharmacy services are delivered
- keeping up to date with developments in the pharmacy sector and applying any relevant learning to their organisation
- developing and supporting a culture of research and innovation
- providing clinical leadership in the sourcing and management of medicines across the organisation
- providing professional support and expert pharmacy advice to colleagues
- commenting on the requirements of their role when carrying out their annual revalidation

Standard 2: Develop a workforce with the right skills, knowledge and experience

To deliver high-quality, efficient and safe pharmacy services with positive outcomes for patients, staff must have the right skills, knowledge, and experience. As part of their overall responsibility, Chief Pharmacists must make sure that the pharmacy workforce receives the necessary development and training. They must also put 'succession planning' in place, so that team efficiency does not suffer when staff move on.

Chief Pharmacists must:

- **be aware of what skills, knowledge and experience are needed to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services in their setting**
- **make the best use of resources, and get the right skill mix in each team to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services**
- **support and value staff, and consider their health and wellbeing**
- **create and maintain a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion where:**
 - **people (including staff, patients and the public) are treated as equals, with dignity and respect, and**
 - **staff meet their own legal responsibilities under equality and human rights legislation, while respecting diversity and cultural differences**
- **make sure staff in their organisation know who the Chief Pharmacist is**



- **let staff know that they can benefit from the defences, as long as certain conditions are met**
- **promote a culture where staff feel safe to report errors and near misses, and can learn from them**
- **make sure that staff are aware of, and meet, any relevant legislation and standards, as well as the standards and guidance set by other regulators and membership bodies**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Chief Pharmacists can meet this standard. It is not meant to be a complete list, and should be used as a prompt and not as a checklist:

- being aware of the skill mix of each team, making sure that gaps are identified and the necessary actions taken
- developing recruitment and retention strategies, as well as succession planning, to deal with any workforce or staffing issues
- keeping up-to-date education and training plans that support the workforce in their ongoing development, including when innovation and new technologies are introduced
- encouraging staff to work collaboratively, including as part of integrated and multi-disciplinary teams
- helping to protect the rights of individuals
- promoting equal opportunity for staff, patients and the wider public
- helping to improve the experience and healthcare outcomes of patients and members of the public who use their organisation's pharmacy services
- building organisational policies and procedures into team management practices – for example, around EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) training, such as that on building 'cultural competence'
- showing leadership in delivering inclusive care and reducing health inequalities, promoting equality of opportunity and challenging discriminatory behaviours, across all interactions with patients, colleagues and the wider public
- developing a culture where staff feel confident and supported in challenging behaviours such as discrimination, bullying, and harassment
- making sure systems are in place so that the workforce can provide feedback and suggestions, and contribute to the development of and changes in the pharmacy service
- identifying good practice and sharing it with all relevant staff
- making sure staff have regular development reviews and that any development needs are met
- developing a culture where staff feel confident about raising concerns, in line with the duty of candour. This is the professional responsibility to be open and honest with patients when something goes wrong with their treatment or care which causes, or has the potential to cause, harm or distress

Standard 3: Delegate responsibly and make sure there are clear lines of accountability

Chief Pharmacists have wide-ranging responsibilities and often need to delegate to make sure services are delivered safely and effectively. To make sure that this happens Chief Pharmacists must delegate responsibly. As senior leaders, when delegating, Chief Pharmacists are responsible and accountable for making sure the lines of accountability are clear. Details of delegation must be recorded, including who is responsible and accountable. This will reduce errors and foster a culture of transparency and accountability. If pharmacy staff are to continue to benefit from the defences, a pharmacy setting must make sure that if a Chief Pharmacist leaves the organisation, a replacement or an interim Chief Pharmacist is in post.

Chief Pharmacists must:

- **provide clarity about the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the pharmacy workforce**
- **carry out appropriate risk assessments and only delegate to people who have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience, and who are confident about assuming the extra responsibility**
- **communicate effectively and record delegation decisions accurately**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Chief Pharmacists can meet this standard. It is not meant to be a complete list and should be used as a prompt and not as a checklist:

- being able to successfully manage and lessen clinical, safety, financial and reputational risk
- making sure risk assessments are carried out and that relevant staff are consulted/involved
- making sure that risk assessments are reviewed when needed for example, if any changes take place
- allowing staff to refuse a delegated task if they have a good reason for example, if they feel the task is outside their scope of practice
- making sure staff are aware of their responsibilities and the reporting structure

Standard 4: Maintain and strengthen governance to ensure safe and effective delivery of pharmacy services

Establishing clear governance, and then maintaining and strengthening it, is a key part of the Chief Pharmacist's role. It involves several aspects, such as having arrangements for managing risks and overseeing how the pharmacy is managed and run. To demonstrate that they are meeting this standard, Chief Pharmacists must communicate effectively at all levels and take a strategic approach when making decisions that affect how pharmacy services are delivered and organised.

Chief Pharmacists must:

- **have oversight of, and make sure that there is effective management of, all pharmacy services and staff**
- **establish and communicate clear lines of reporting**
- **make sure there is a process to get feedback, which includes feedback about interventions, errors and incidents, and that the process is reviewed regularly and appropriately managed**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Chief Pharmacists can meet this standard. It is not meant to be a complete list and should be used as a prompt and not as a checklist:

- reviewing governance procedures regularly, including standard operating procedures (SOPs), and having oversight of how the

pharmacy is run and how services are delivered

- making sure necessary records are kept and are up to date and accurate
- making sure that an effective records management system is in place, and that relevant staff are trained in how to use it
- carrying out robust performance measurement and reporting, and making changes when needed
- having oversight of, and contributing to, the development and review of policies
- having systems in place to anticipate, identify and respond to risks
- making sure there are systems in place to identify and report errors, including preparation and dispensing errors, and that errors are reviewed and appropriately managed
- regularly reviewing and acting on internal and external complaints and concerns
- planning and using resources effectively, considering any financial, audit and budgetary requirements



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