

# Regulatory engagement meetings

## Introduction

In 2014, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) introduced Strategic Relationship Managers (SRMs) – an additional role given to selected GPhC inspectors - to modernise the regulation of pharmacies. This initiative aimed to make our approach to regulation more effective, efficient, and strategic. SRMs were intended to help inspectors understand the systems and processes implemented by organisations, reducing the time spent reviewing common procedures across multiple premises. Instead, inspectors could focus on how well each individual premises adhered to these processes.

## Current SRM relationships

Currently, we maintain SRM relationships with 11 larger organisations (Asda, Boots, Cohens, Day Lewis, Jhoots, Morrisons, Paydens, Rowlands, Superdrug, Tesco, and Well). We meet with them regularly to exchange regulatory updates. Key representatives from each organisation meet with an assigned inspector to discuss changes in processes, governance, and personnel.

## Review of SRM model

In 2025, we conducted a comprehensive internal review of the SRM model to assess its effectiveness and its impact on pharmacy regulation. This review aligned with our strategic aim to deliver tailored regulatory responses based on context and emerging issues, ensuring timely and effective outcomes.

## Findings of the review

The review considered the evolving pharmacy landscape, including changes in funding models, market exits, and ownership transitions. It also examined regulatory challenges identified through inspections and reported concerns. The findings showed that organisations engaged through SRMs met the Standards and guidance for registered pharmacies in over 90% of their branches. As part of the review, feedback was sought on the current and potential new ways of working from our inspectorate and key members of the organisations that we have SRMs with. From the feedback received, we acknowledge the particular strength in retaining positive working relationships with main points of contact between organisations to help promptly address when there are challenges and/or to share positive learning or organisational developments.

## Introduction of regulatory engagement meetings (REMs)

As part of our ongoing efforts to modernise pharmacy regulation, we are proposing to introduce a new format: regulatory engagement meetings (REMs). These would be targeted to organisations of all sizes whose past inspection outcomes and reported concerns tend to fall below the expected standard, with the goal of improving these metrics through regular, structured engagement. It is anticipated that the organisations that we have REMs with would therefore naturally change over time, and would be informed by an evidence-based, data-led approach.

## Future planning

Whilst we are trialling our proposed new approach, the current SRM model will continue to operate alongside REMs over the forthcoming months. We are also reviewing how we routinely input into more strategic external meetings with key stakeholder organisations so we can more consistently and effectively collaborate, share information and retain and build upon existing positive working relationships. Furthermore, we are keen to ensure greater transparency and cost-effective use of resources and are currently undertaking steps to make better use of our data (including 'benchmarking' information and themes/trends reporting).

Once this is further progressed, and we have established more detail relating to REMs, we will likely cease the current SRM arrangements. We intend to maintain having key points of contact between respective organisations, and to develop these with organisations that we don't currently have this with, so that ad hoc issues can be communicated and resolved in a timely way. We plan to share via our website who we have REMs with and what REMs entail, which we will update as it changes over time. We will also continue to keep any new arrangements under active review and seek feedback should further changes be required.