

We are sharing the latest themes and insights from our work, to inform and empower our registrants and pharmacy owners to deliver trusted, safe, and effective care.

Inspections

This financial year, 1,973 inspections (totalling 5,584 regulatory contacts across 3,671 different pharmacies) have been achieved: the highest since pre-COVID-19 (*Figure 1*). We continue to explore how to free up inspector time to focus on more inspections: seconding an inspector into our Fitness to Practise (FtP) triage team, has reduced the number of concern referrals into the inspectorate from 888 in Q3 to 489 in Q4.

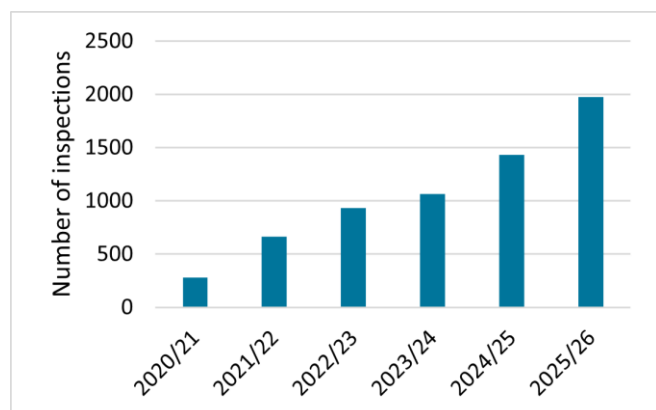


Figure 1: Number of inspections (all types), by financial year

The proportion of pharmacies meeting standards has continued to increase, with internet pharmacies demonstrating a sustained improvement (82% for routine inspections in Q4 compared to 60% in Q1) (*Figure 2*), since we updated our **guidance on distance selling**.

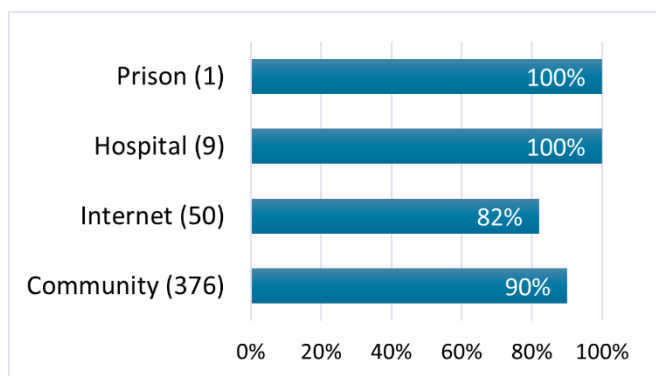


Figure 2: Routine inspections meeting standards by pharmacy type (Q4 2025/26)

More pharmacies met Standards 2.2 (staff skills and qualifications), 4.2 (services delivered safely and effectively), and 4.3 (managing medicines and medical devices), primarily due to improvements in structured staff training, effective patient counselling, clear documentation of non-supply decisions, and use of technology to support safe dispensing.

However, Standards 1.1 (risk identification and management), 1.2 (reviewing and monitoring the safety of services), and 4.2 (services delivered safely and effectively) were most often not met, with non-compliance increasing since Q3. This continues to be due to issues relating to poor governance: out-of-date standard operating procedures, limited recording and review of errors and near misses, and inadequate auditing of services such as weight management, where Body Mass Index (BMI) was often neither independently verified nor recorded.

Seven pharmacies were subject to enforcement action this quarter, two of which related to the governance failures connected with the supply of the antihistamine cyclizine. The risk of the misuse of cyclizine and the importance of safe provisions around this medicine has been previously highlighted in one of our **Regulate articles**.

Fitness to Practise

The number of concerns received by our Customer Services and FtP teams has continued to fall: for FtP, this is a reverse in a sustained upward trend since 2021/22. Members of the public continue to be the primary source of FtP concerns at 57%, despite this being the lowest proportion recorded in recent years. These reductions follow the introduction of our **Acceptance Criteria** and redesigned website content, to reduce inappropriate referrals.

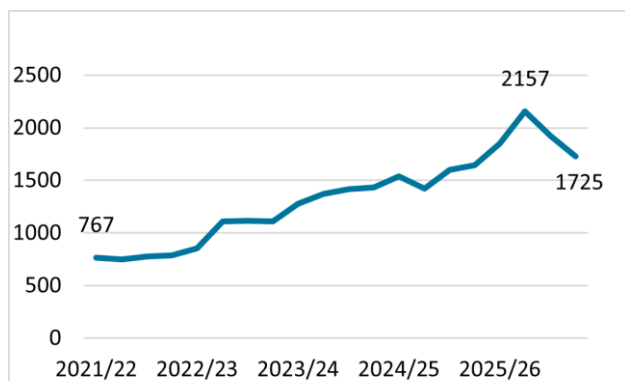


Figure 3 Number of FtP concerns received over time

Only 8% of FtP concerns received were referred to investigation. Where a registrant has been identified, most concerns continue to relate to pharmacists (92%). Where a setting was recorded, concerns about internet pharmacies continued to decrease, from 12% in Q1 to 7% in Q4, consistent with more internet pharmacies meeting standards at inspection.

If we receive a concern indicating that a pharmacist's or pharmacy technician's behaviour or practice poses a serious risk to patient safety, we may apply to the FtP Committee (FtPC) for an interim order (IO). In Q4, there were 7 new IOs.

Cases can be closed by the Investigating Committee (IC) or referred on to the FtPC. In Q4, 9 were closed at IC and 9 were referred to FtPC, the most serious stage of the process.

In Q4, 25 cases were closed at FtPC: 9 registrants were removed from the register. These cases included sexual assault, child sex offences, theft, and prescribing issues. Of those with an IO, six cases resulted in suspension, and one received conditions on practices: issues included substance use, sexual misconduct and the sale of counterfeit Mounjaro®.

In Q4, we published a **Regulate article on maintaining clear professional and sexual boundaries** in response to the number of sexual misconduct related cases and concerns received.

Queries

The customer contact centre handled 9,262 queries in Q4, predominantly about registrations (21%, mostly exam adjustments and applications) and overseas queries (10%).

As weight management medication and services remained a consistent theme, including in media

enquiries, in Q4 we worked with **Beat** to **increase awareness of the associated risks in people with eating disorders**. We also provided evidence to the **Health and Social Care Committee** to highlight the importance of private providers needing access to clinical (GP) records and participated in an **ITV interview**.

Education Accreditation

From the 8 accreditation, 6 re-accreditation and 1 recognition events, we identified an increasing need for remediation related to staffing levels. In response, expectations have been strengthened though updates to how MPharm degrees are assessed, and we have introduced a staffing plan template to make the information that providers submit clearer and easier to review.