General Pharmaceutical Council

Standards for Responsible Pharmacists

November 2026

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About us

We regulate pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered 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 pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies to enter and remain on our register.

We ask pharmacists, pharmacy technicians 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 pharmacist, pharmacy technician 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 (Responsible Pharmacists, Superintendent Pharmacists etc.) Order 2022

When we use the terms 'pharmacists' and 'pharmacy technicians' in these standards we mean pharmacists and pharmacy technicians registered with the GPhC.

The Pharmacy (Responsible Pharmacists, Superintendent Pharmacists etc.) Order 2022 has given the GPhC the power to make rules and set standards that describe the role and professional responsibilities of Responsible Pharmacists, as well as the conduct, ethics and performance expected of them.

These standards apply in England, Scotland and Wales – as do the accompanying rules, The **Medicines (Pharmacies) (Responsible Pharmacist) Rules 2026**, which were developed alongside these standards. The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland are responsible for producing the standards and regulations for Responsible Pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

One of the aims of these standards is to clarify the relationship between pharmacy owners, Superintendent Pharmacists and Responsible Pharmacists, making clear the accountability of each role. In turn, this will strengthen pharmacy governance to support better use of the skill mix in pharmacy teams. This will allow teams to deliver more clinical services and direct patient care in the community, as well as supporting wider health and social care services and delivering safe and effective care to patients and the public.

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

The role of Responsible Pharmacists

The Medicines Act 1968 was amended in 2009, and the **Medicines (Pharmacies) (Responsible Pharmacist) Regulations 2008** came into force on 1 October 2009. This introduced the role of the Responsible Pharmacist in connection with the lawful running of a retail pharmacy business.

Every registered pharmacy must have a Responsible Pharmacist present in the pharmacy. This is a legal requirement – a pharmacy must not operate without a Responsible Pharmacist being signed into the pharmacy record and in charge. The introduction of the **Pharmacy (Responsible Pharmacists, Superintendent Pharmacists etc.) Order 2022** does not change that requirement.

Criteria

The owner of a retail pharmacy business must appoint a Responsible Pharmacist, who is a registered pharmacist, to be in charge of the registered pharmacy premises. The Responsible Pharmacist is responsible for the registered pharmacy premises when it is operational,

during the period when their details are entered in the pharmacy record as being the Responsible Pharmacist.

A pharmacist must only assume responsibility for a registered pharmacy, and enter their details in the pharmacy record as being the Responsible Pharmacist, if they are satisfied they can fully comply with all the professional and legal requirements that apply to this role.

There are legal requirements which the Responsible Pharmacist must comply with, which include:

- being responsible and accountable for securing the safe and effective operation of the pharmacy business carried on at or from the premises in question, so far as concerns the retail sale and supply of medicinal products at or from those pharmacy premises, and their assembly, preparation or dispensing with a view to retail sale or supply
- **displaying a notice** that gives the name of the Responsible Pharmacist on duty and their GPhC registration number, and states that they are currently in charge of the pharmacy business carried on at or from those premises
- making and keeping records on the day-to-day running of the pharmacy
- only being responsible for one pharmacy premises at a time
- only being absent from the pharmacy premises for a maximum of two hours during the pharmacy's business hours. If there is more than one Responsible Pharmacist during a business day, the total time when any of them is absent must not be more than two hours in a 24-hour period beginning and ending at midnight
- if reasonably practicable, being contactable by other pharmacy staff while they are absent. The Responsible Pharmacist must also be able to return to the pharmacy premises with reasonable promptness, if they consider this is necessary to secure the safe and effective running of the pharmacy business at or from those premises. If this is not possible, arrangements must be made to make sure that another pharmacist is available and contactable to give advice

The Responsible Pharmacist must have organisational oversight of, and be responsible for the day-to-day management of, an individual pharmacy premises. This includes making sure that all pharmacy-related services are delivered so that the health, safety, and wellbeing of patients and the public are safeguarded. Services include:

- managing and supplying medicines and medical devices
- managing and supplying other products intended for supply or administration, and
- providing any clinical advice and/or services

A Responsible Pharmacist cannot perform their role in any location other than the pharmacy premises where their details are entered into the pharmacy record.

Keeping records

The Pharmacy (Responsible Pharmacists, Superintendent Pharmacists etc.) Order 2022 removes responsibility from Responsible Pharmacists to establish, maintain and keep under review standard operating procedures

(SOPs). This is now the responsibility of Superintendent Pharmacists.

The duty for Responsible Pharmacists to make certain records is also removed. However, there are some records which Responsible Pharmacists must ensure are kept, and are accurate and made as soon after the event as possible. These records relate to the day-to-day running of the pharmacy premises, examples of which include:

- the Responsible Pharmacist record
- records of interventions and consultations
- controlled drugs records
- records of authorisations put in place, varied, or revoked

The duty to keep these records reflects the central role of the Responsible Pharmacist in:

- making sure the pharmacy meets its legal responsibilities, and
- managing risk

while their details are entered in the pharmacy record as the Responsible Pharmacist in charge of a pharmacy premises.

The records must then be shared with the Superintendent Pharmacist, if there is one, or the pharmacy owner. The Superintendent Pharmacist is responsible for:

- checking these records
- storing them securely and for a prescribed period, and
- making sure any necessary follow-up action is taken

The Superintendent Pharmacist and pharmacy owner are responsible for making sure that all records are properly maintained and are kept for a prescribed period. The responsibilities of the pharmacy owner are set out in our **Standards for registered pharmacies**.

Absence

The Responsible Pharmacist can be absent from the pharmacy premises for a maximum of two hours during the pharmacy's business hours. If there is more than one Responsible Pharmacist during a business day, the total time when any of them is absent must not be more than two hours in a 24-hour period beginning and ending at midnight.

A pharmacist is treated as being absent from premises that are a registered pharmacy if they are at the pharmacy, but:

- not available to intervene in the transaction in question, or
- not in a position to intervene in the transaction in question

For example, they may be in a consultation room with a patient.

'Business hours' is defined in The Medicines (Pharmacies) (Responsible Pharmacist) Rules 2026 as the period during which the pharmacy business is operational on any day. 'Operational' is also defined in The Medicines (Pharmacies) (Responsible Pharmacist) Rules as any time when one or more members of staff are undertaking 'substantive activities' forming part of the carrying on of a retail pharmacy business at or from those premises (whether or not the premises are open to the public). 'Substantive activities' forming part of the carrying on of a retail pharmacy business are those set out in section 10 and section 72A of the Medicines Act 1968 and include:

- preparing medicinal products
- assembling medicinal products
- preparing a stock of medicinal products
- dispensing medicinal products
- selling or supplying medicinal products (including those on the general sales list) at or from the pharmacy premises
- offering or exposing medicinal products for sale or supply at or from the pharmacy premises

The only exceptions to the two-hour absence rule are in an emergency situation where delays causing the Responsible Pharmacist to return after two hours are unforeseen and unavoidable, and patient care could be compromised. In this situation, the Responsible Pharmacist must use their professional judgement to decide on the best course of action. On returning to the pharmacy premises, the Responsible Pharmacist must provide a written record of events. This must include an explanation of why they were absent for more than two hours and the time at which their absence ended. This record must then be made available to the GPhC as soon after the event as reasonably practicable.

The law permits the Responsible Pharmacist in charge of a pharmacy premises to be absent for a maximum of two hours during business hours. However, the Responsible Pharmacist's legal duty to secure the safe and effective running of the retail pharmacy business at those premises when the activities listed in section 10 and section 72A of the Medicines 1968 are being performed continues during their absence from the pharmacy premises. Responsible Pharmacists must therefore satisfy themselves that, and be able to demonstrate how, they continue to meet their legal duties when they are not physically present at the pharmacy premises. Responsible Pharmacists must consider and decide whether they:

- can be contactable by pharmacy staff throughout their absence, and
- are able to return to the pharmacy premises promptly if this is needed to secure the safe and effective running of the pharmacy premises, before they leave the premises during business hours

What to consider before taking on the role of the Responsible Pharmacist

Responsible pharmacists must consider the context in which the pharmacy premises operates and the needs of the pharmacy premises they are responsible for, which include:

- how the pharmacy services are delivered – that is, in a traditional in-person way, at a distance, on the internet and so on
- the range of services provided, including those provided by a third party, agent or contractor
- the skill mix, knowledge and experience of staff in the pharmacy team, as well as the number of staff in the team
- understanding the needs of patients and people who use their pharmacy services

Before taking on the role of Responsible Pharmacist, the pharmacist must:

- recognise and understand the extra professional and legal responsibilities they will have

- make sure they can fully comply with the professional and legal responsibilities of a Responsible Pharmacist, and
- satisfy themselves that they have the appropriate competencies and experience to safely and effectively fulfil the duties of the Responsible Pharmacist

Authorisation and supervision

The Human Medicines (Authorisation by Pharmacists and Supervision by Pharmacy Technicians) Order 2025 makes changes to the **Medicines Act 1968** and the **Human Medicines Regulations 2012**. These changes will be fully in force from 10 December 2026 and will:

- allow pharmacists to authorise (without directly supervising) registered pharmacy technicians to carry out, or supervise others in carrying out, the preparation, assembly, dispensing, sale and supply of medicines
- allow pharmacists to authorise any member of the pharmacy team to hand out checked and bagged prescription-only medicines without a pharmacist being present
- allow pharmacy technicians working in hospital aseptic facilities to take the main responsibility for preparing, assembling and dispensing medicinal products that do not have a specials manufacturer's licence

This new legislation around supervision is intended to support more effective use of the skills of every member of the pharmacy team. The legislation is 'enabling' in its effects, not mandatory. The legal changes do not change the responsibility that each pharmacist and pharmacy technician has:

- to use their professional judgement in deciding which activities to take responsibility for or delegate to others, and
- to make sure that they work within their competence at all times

The legal changes do not:

- allow 'remote' supervision. This means that a pharmacist cannot fulfil their responsibilities to supervise pharmacy staff while being at a different location to the pharmacy premises where their details are entered in the pharmacy record as the Responsible Pharmacist
- remove the need for pharmacists to carry out appropriate clinical checks linked to the dispensing process. Pharmacists must still carry out the clinical check on a prescription to make sure that it is appropriate for the patient

Under section 10 of the **Medicines Act 1968**, pharmacists are entitled to carry out, or supervise the carrying out of, tasks of preparation, assembly and dispensing of medicinal products that do not have a manufacturing licence. This applies even if the product is altered in a way that means it is no longer supplied in line with the terms of its product licence, if it has one, as long as what is done is carried out in:

- a registered pharmacy
- a hospital
- a health centre, or
- a Scottish care home service

The Human Medicines (Authorisation by Pharmacists and Supervision by Pharmacy Technicians) Order 2025 amends the **Medicines Act 1968** to allow a pharmacist to authorise a pharmacy technician to either:

- carry out these tasks, or
- with the permission of the pharmacist, to supervise others to carry out these tasks

Who can authorise

Authorisation can only be given by a registered pharmacist, and must take place in Great Britain in:

- a registered pharmacy
- a hospital
- a Scottish care home service, or
- a health centre

In giving an authorisation, a pharmacist must have due regard to patient safety.

When a pharmacist authorises someone else, the pharmacist remains responsible and professionally accountable for tasks performed by another person under the terms of the authorisation. This is because it is not possible to delegate something to someone else and completely hand over accountability to the person who has been delegated.

If something goes wrong, a number of individuals could have been involved in performing tasks under an authorisation. These could include the authorising pharmacist and, for example, a pharmacy technician and other members of the pharmacy team. The extent and degree of responsibility, accountability and liability of the individuals involved will depend on the facts and circumstances unique to each situation. If there is an investigation into what happened and who is responsible, the courts and/or we will decide how to apportion accountability.

The authorising pharmacist role is distinct from the Responsible Pharmacist and Superintendent Pharmacist roles. (But, in practice, all three roles could be fulfilled by one person in a retail pharmacy setting.)

Using authorisation

The pharmacy's standard operating procedures must include instructions covering the ways any authorisation may be given, recorded, changed, withdrawn or revoked.

Authorisation can be:

- general or specific, and contain conditions or restrictions
- given orally or in writing. Our expectation is that authorisation will be provided in writing, with oral authorisation being used only in an emergency. If oral authorisation is used, the authorising pharmacist must make a full written record of the authorisation as soon as possible and in any event no later than by the end of the business day on which the authorisation is made
- changed or withdrawn by the pharmacist who gives the authorisation

To show that an authorisation has been accepted, it must be signed by both the authorising pharmacist and the person being authorised.

Authorising Pharmacist

The authorising pharmacist must:

- write a full record of the authorisation on the day that the authorisation is made, in line with the instructions set out in their standard operating procedures
- make sure that the Responsible Pharmacist is informed of all authorisations as they are made, or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards, and in any event no later than by the end of the business day on which the authorisations are made
- submit written records of all authorisations they have made on that business day to the Responsible Pharmacist, and make sure these records are submitted on the same day the authorisations are made
- make sure authorisation is used appropriately. This includes making sure the pharmacy technician being authorised (or in the case of handing out checked and bagged prescriptions, any member of pharmacy staff being authorised) is:
  - competent and has the appropriate education, training, skills and experience – that is, the task is within their scope of practice
  - willing to take on the task
  - clear about the responsibility and accountability they will be assuming
  - clear about the limits and extent of what is being authorised
- at regular intervals as necessary, review authorisations they have given and use their professional judgement in deciding whether the authorisations should continue. At the time of the review, they must make a written record, including:
  - the date and time of the review, and
  - the outcome (authorisation to continue, authorisation varied, or authorisation withdrawn)

This must be recorded and submitted to the Responsible Pharmacist on the same business day the review took place.

When providing any authorisation, a pharmacist must have due regard to patient safety. If they do not:

- it may constitute misconduct that impairs their fitness to practise
- we may open an investigation into concerns we receive about their fitness to practise, and
- we may also investigate the impact unsafe authorisations have upon the pharmacy premises' ability to run safely and effectively and meet our Standards for registered pharmacies

Every authorisation by a pharmacist, including authorisations to supervise other staff members, must state that the authorised task can only be done at or from the registered pharmacy premises named in the authorisation.

A pharmacist can authorise a pharmacy technician to carry out a variety of tasks, including:

- preparing or dispensing medicinal products in line with prescriptions supplied after the authorisation is given

- procuring the preparation or dispensing of medicinal products in line with prescriptions supplied after the authorisation is given

A pharmacist can also authorise a pharmacy technician to supervise someone else in:

- preparing or dispensing medicinal products in line with prescriptions supplied after the authorisation is given, or
- procuring the preparation or dispensing of medicinal products in line with prescriptions supplied after the authorisation is given

A pharmacy technician must be authorised to supervise another member of staff to do something.

A pharmacist can authorise any suitably trained and competent member of the pharmacy team, not just pharmacy technicians, to hand out checked and bagged prescriptions in the absence of a pharmacist or if a pharmacist is treated as absent.

Pharmacists must make sure that any member of the pharmacy team who is authorised to carry out or supervise a task has the appropriate knowledge and skills to do this. This responsibility also applies to locum pharmacists. When pharmacy staff are authorised to hand out checked and bagged prescriptions, there must be procedures in place for if:

- a patient specifically asks for advice from a pharmacist, or
- a patient mentions or produces information that means they need to talk to a pharmacist

The pharmacy's standard operating procedures and 'sale of medicines protocols' must include clear instructions on the conditions under which:

- a sale or supply should not go ahead, and
- there needs to be a discussion between the patient and the pharmacist

Pharmacy technicians

The pharmacy technician must:

- make sure they have the appropriate education, training, skills and experience for the task(s) being authorised and are working within their scope of practice
- decide if they are willing to take on the task(s) being authorised
- be clear about the responsibility and accountability they will be assuming
- be clear about the limits and extent of what is being authorised, and work within this

Pharmacy technicians can say 'no' to an authorisation for several reasons, including if:

- they think the task is outside their scope of practice, or
- they do not feel confident or safe in carrying out the task

The role of the Responsible Pharmacist

The Responsible Pharmacist must:

- check that all authorisations made in the pharmacy, during the time they are signed in, are in line with the relevant standard operating procedures
- submit all checked authorisation records to the Superintendent Pharmacist if there is one, or the pharmacy owner, for them to store appropriately

The Responsible Pharmacist can revoke an authorisation given by another pharmacist if they believe:

- it does not meet patient safety obligations, or
- it poses a risk to the safe and effective running of the pharmacy and undermines their ability to meet their responsibility for this

If a Responsible Pharmacist revokes an authorisation given by another pharmacist, they must make a written record of their reason(s). This record must be created as soon as possible and in any event no later than by the end of the business day the decision is made. It must include the time and date of the decision. The Responsible Pharmacist must inform the person or persons acting under the authorisation, for example the pharmacy technician or the entire pharmacy team, as soon as reasonably practicable of their decision to revoke the authorisation. If the Responsible Pharmacist revokes an authorisation, they can issue an alternative authorisation in its place if they consider it necessary.

There is more guidance from the Royal College of Pharmacy (RCPharm) on how to undertake authorisation on their website.

Other points to consider when authorising

Controlled drugs

There are no changes to the handling and dispensing of controlled drugs under the new provisions.

Aseptic facilities

The GPhC does not regulate aseptic facilities. Please see the RCPharm updated standards for the Quality Assurance of Aseptic Preparation. This gives information on the supervision legislation which allows pharmacy technicians in hospital aseptic facilities to take the main responsibility for preparing, assembling and dispensing medicinal products that do not have a manufacturer's 'specials' licence.

Clinical trials

During clinical trials, hospital and health centre pharmacies and dispensaries can assemble medicinal products for investigation without needing a manufacturing licence. The new arrangements for authorisation by pharmacists – and supervision by pharmacy technicians – will apply, in a simplified way, to the assembly of these 'investigational' medicinal products.

Pharmacist who is absent or treated as absent

If a pharmacist is going to be absent, or treated as absent, and they have dispensed or supervised a checked prescription item(s) which is then ready for sale or supply at or from a registered pharmacy, the pharmacist can authorise any member of the pharmacy staff to

make the final supply of that medicine to or for a patient. The RCPharm has produced guidance on how to undertake authorisation, and you can see this on their website.

The standards for Responsible Pharmacists

The standards for Responsible Pharmacists set out their professional responsibilities, as well as the knowledge, conduct, ethics and performance required of a Responsible Pharmacist if they are to support the pharmacy, and its staff, in delivering safe and effective pharmacy services.

The Responsible Pharmacist is responsible for the safe and effective day-to-day running of the pharmacy business, when it is operational. Being operational means one or more members of staff are undertaking substantive activities forming part of the carrying on of a retail pharmacy business at or from those premises (whether or not the premises are open to the public). This includes the preparation, assembly, dispensing and sale or supply of medicines, including those on the general sale list.

Responsible pharmacists must meet the following standards:

1. **Prioritise patient safety**
2. **Provide the leadership and management needed to ensure the safe and effective operation of the pharmacy premises**
3. **Make sure, if using authorisation, to authorise responsibly, have regard to patient safety and make clear the lines of accountability**
4. **Maintain and strengthen governance to ensure the safe and effective delivery of pharmacy services**

The standards are designed to be 'outcome focused'. This is to acknowledge the different circumstances of individual registered pharmacy premises. We have provided examples of how the standards can be met in practice, but we accept that there may be multiple ways of achieving each outcome. We want to give Responsible Pharmacists the flexibility to exercise their professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public. Responsible Pharmacists must decide how to meet these standards and their other legal and professional responsibilities, while taking account of the requirements of the pharmacy premises they are responsible for.

The standards are also a statement of what patients, and people working with Responsible Pharmacists, can expect of them. They are essential in making sure that patients and the public receive safe and effective care.

Applying the standards

The standards for Responsible Pharmacists are all equally important and must be met during the times when the registered pharmacist is signed into the pharmacy record as the Responsible Pharmacist.

Responsible Pharmacists are directly accountable for meeting the standards set out in this document and must be able to justify their conduct and the decisions they make. However, they also share responsibility with the pharmacy owner and Superintendent Pharmacist for ensuring:

- the safe and effective running of the pharmacy premises, and
- safe provision of pharmacy services at or from the pharmacy premises

It is therefore vital that pharmacy owners, Superintendent Pharmacists and pharmacy staff are familiar with these standards and that they work together to support the Responsible Pharmacist in performing their role(s) and responsibilities. This is to ensure patients and the public are kept safe when using pharmacy services.

Alongside these standards, Responsible Pharmacists must also comply with their legal responsibilities, and with the GPhC's **Standards for pharmacy professionals** and other relevant standards.

Responsible Pharmacists should also be familiar with:

- any supporting guidance published on our website, and
- guidance produced by other relevant regulatory bodies or pharmacy organisations, such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

Responsible Pharmacists should also keep up to date with, and apply, national guidance and best practice guidance. Following guidance is an important part of making sure that our standards are met.

There may be times when Responsible Pharmacists are faced with conflicting legal and professional responsibilities. Or they may face complex situations that involve having to balance competing priorities. Both the standards for pharmacy professionals and these standards provide a framework to help and support Responsible Pharmacists to use their professional judgement and make difficult decisions. We expect Responsible Pharmacists to act in the best interests of patients and the public, and to consider these standards, their legal duties and any relevant guidance when making decisions, including those covering medicines legislation.

How to demonstrate that the standards are being met

There are several ways that Responsible Pharmacists can show that they are meeting the standards, including:

- during a regulatory inspection discussion, and by demonstrating that the GPhC standards for Responsible Pharmacists and those for registered pharmacies are being met
- during a regulatory inspection discussion with another regulatory body: for example, CQC, HIS, or HIW. (This may be the case if the pharmacy has an agreement with a third party to provide a service, such as prescribing, regulated by the CQC, HIS or HIW)
- by referring to the requirements of their role as a Responsible Pharmacist when carrying out their revalidation work
- through investigation, if a concern is raised with the pharmacy or 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 GPhC, CQC, HIS or HIW

- during the regular performance reviews with their line manager

If a Responsible Pharmacist does not meet these standards we may investigate concerns about their fitness to practise. This could result in the GPhC taking enforcement action against the pharmacy, the pharmacy owner, the Superintendent Pharmacist, the Responsible Pharmacist, or all four. It is important to note that each case is considered individually, and that enforcement action is not necessarily taken if a standard is not met.

Standard 1: Prioritise patient safety

As the person in charge of the day-to-day running of a pharmacy premises, Responsible Pharmacists have significant responsibilities for and influence over the culture, governance and environment of the pharmacy premises. This includes making sure that:

- the standard operating procedures are followed
- pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working at the pharmacy meet the standards for pharmacy professionals, and
- all pharmacy staff maintain the safe and effective delivery of pharmacy services

The Responsible Pharmacist must:

- **Make patient safety a priority and take action to protect the wellbeing of patients and the public, including supporting staff to report incidents, near misses and errors**
- **Make sure that all pharmacy staff are aware of, and meet, all relevant legislation and standards, as well as following the standards and guidance set by other regulators and membership bodies**
- **Be clear about, and share with the pharmacy staff, the vision and strategy needed to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public by managing and delivering safe and effective pharmacy services. These include clinical advice and services, the management and supply of medicines and medical devices, and any other**

product intended for supply or administration

- **Make sure that all pharmacy staff are aware of, and follow, the standard operating procedures**
- **Work with all pharmacy staff to meet the needs of patients, including managing information to protect the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of patients and the public who receive pharmacy services**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Responsible 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:

- Make sure pharmacy staff understand their impact and the wider impact of pharmacy on patients
- Make sure that patients know how to raise a concern or complaint, and then deal with any complaints or concerns in an appropriate and timely way
- Provide opportunities for patients to give feedback
- Appropriately use available research, technology and innovation to enhance safety and improve services
- Work with the Superintendent Pharmacist/pharmacy owner to adapt and innovate to meet the changing needs of patients, and changes to how services are delivered at, or from, the pharmacy premises
- Provide professional support and expert pharmacy advice to colleagues
- Empower pharmacy staff to use their professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public
- Appropriately manage personal or organisational goals, incentives or targets so that their own professional judgement – or that of the pharmacy team – is not compromised, and that safe and effective care can continue to be delivered
- Set an example for the whole team, including people who are working towards registration as a pharmacist or pharmacy technician
- Use interventions such as medication safety bulletins, quality improvement schemes and barcode scanning technology to ensure medication safety

Standard 2: Provide the leadership and management needed to ensure the safe and effective operation of the pharmacy

During the time the Responsible Pharmacist is signed into the pharmacy record, they are responsible for making sure the pharmacy team provide safe and effective care and pharmacy services. This includes registered pharmacy professionals and unregistered staff. The skill mix needed at each pharmacy premises will depend on the needs of patients and the public, which may change over time. Responsible Pharmacists need to be aware of these changing needs – as well as changes to the way services are delivered – and must develop a team with the right skills, knowledge and experience. Responsible Pharmacists need to work with the Superintendent Pharmacist or pharmacy owner to continually assess staffing levels and the appropriateness of the skill mix. This needs to be done within the context of each individual pharmacy premises and in line with changing services, workload and feedback, to ensure patient safety.

The Responsible Pharmacist must:

- **Make sure that the notice with their name and registration number is clearly displayed within the pharmacy premises. In online pharmacies this can be done in various ways, including on the digital platform associated with the pharmacy, or it can be communicated to people when medicines are supplied**
- **Work collaboratively with the Superintendent Pharmacist (if there is one), the pharmacy owner and the pharmacy team, to contribute to:**
    - **shared organisational and system objectives**
    - **governance meetings, and**
    - **third-party meetings**
- **Be aware of the skill mix needed by the pharmacy team to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services in their setting, and work with the Superintendent Pharmacist (or the pharmacy owner if there is no Superintendent Pharmacist) to put this in place**
- **Support and value staff, and consider their safety, health and wellbeing**
- **Show leadership in delivering inclusive care and reducing health inequalities**
- **Promote equality of opportunity and make sure that all forms of discrimination in interactions with colleagues, patients and the public are identified, challenged and acted on**
- **Develop a safe culture where staff feel confident and supported to challenge behaviours such as discrimination, bullying and harassment**
- **Create and maintain a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion where:**
    - **people (including staff, patients and the public) are treated as equals, and 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 that staff feel confident and supported to speak up when they have concerns or things go wrong**
- **Encourage and support a culture of continuous learning and development where staff feel safe to report errors and near misses, and can learn from them**
- **Lead by example, taking responsibility for their own professional growth and development**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Responsible 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:

- Make sure that gaps in the skills, knowledge and experience of the pharmacy team are identified and that the necessary actions are taken to close those gaps
- Make sure pharmacy staff have regular development reviews and that any development needs are met
- Encourage pharmacy staff to work collaboratively, including with other healthcare professionals
- Understand their role and responsibilities in tutoring and supervising trainee pharmacists and trainee pharmacy technicians
- Make sure that within three months of starting in their role, any unregistered pharmacy staff are enrolled on the education and training courses needed to meet the competency level required for their role
- Help to improve the experience and healthcare outcomes of patients and members of the public who use their pharmacy services
- Work with the Superintendent Pharmacist to make sure systems are in place so that the team can provide feedback – for example, if asked to perform training or asked to carry out activities outside the scope of their normal ones
- Identify good practice and guidance and share with all relevant staff
- Demonstrate good decision-making skills that positively affect how pharmacy services are delivered, and solve problems in a timely way
- Empower staff to handle challenging situations confidently and professionally, whether that means having the right conversations with managers or knowing when and how to raise a concern
- Promote policies and procedures that support staff to raise 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
- Keep up to date with developments in the pharmacy sector, including sustainable healthcare practices, and apply any relevant learning to their organisation

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

Pharmacists, including Responsible Pharmacists, now have the option to authorise certain tasks to be carried out by, or under the supervision of, registered pharmacy technicians. When authorisation is used appropriately it can:

- help manage workload
- free up pharmacists' time for clinical work
- support pharmacy technicians in expanding their scope of practice, and
- provide development opportunities for the team

When authorisation is used, the Responsible Pharmacist must:

- **Make sure that authorising pharmacists and the staff being authorised are aware of – and follow – the relevant standard operating procedures**
- **Make sure authorisation is used appropriately. This includes making sure the pharmacy technician being authorised is:**
    - **competent and has the appropriate education, training, skills and experience – that is, the task is within their scope of practice**
    - **willing to take on the task**
    - **clear about the responsibility and accountability they will be assuming**
    - **clear about the limits and extent of what is being authorised**
- **Make sure authorisation records are accurate and complete**

All authorising pharmacists are responsible and accountable for the authorisations they make. If tasks are authorised to an appropriate person, such as a pharmacy technician, the responsibility and accountability for carrying out the task then rests with both the authorising pharmacist and the pharmacy technician. However, the Responsible Pharmacist must be aware of all authorisations given by other registered pharmacists which are in force during the time that they are signed into the pharmacy record as the Responsible Pharmacist.

Details of all authorisations, including those given orally, must be recorded accurately in writing and kept for five years. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent Pharmacist to put systems in place to record authorisation decisions and to maintain these systems. (If the retail pharmacy business is not required by law to appoint a Superintendent Pharmacist, the pharmacy owner has this responsibility.) However, it is the responsibility of the authorising pharmacist and the Responsible Pharmacist (if they are not the authorising pharmacist) to make sure that the records made are complete and accurate. This will reduce errors and foster a culture of transparency and accountability.

The Responsible Pharmacist can revoke an authorisation made by another registered pharmacist if they believe it:

- does not meet patient safety obligations

- poses a risk to the safe and effective running of the pharmacy premises, or
- undermines the Responsible Pharmacist's ability to meet their responsibilities

However, they must make a record of their reason(s).

It is the responsibility of the Responsible Pharmacist to make sure that all authorising pharmacists:

- are aware of the relevant standard operating procedures
- know how to authorise correctly
- know what can or can't be authorised
- know that the appropriate records must be made and submitted to the Responsible Pharmacist for checking by the end of the day, at the latest, on which the authorisation is made

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Responsible 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:

- Allow pharmacy technicians to use their professional judgement when they have been authorised to undertake certain tasks such as the preparation, assembly, dispensing and sale or supply of medicines
- Make sure pharmacy staff are aware of their responsibilities and those of others in the team, and the reporting structure
- Make sure that pharmacy staff maintain and continue to develop their competence: for example, through training, CPD events, coaching and mentoring
- Provide appropriate resources so that pharmacy staff can carry out authorised responsibilities safely and effectively
- With the Superintendent Pharmacist, if there is one, monitor and review the safety of authorisations, including incidents, errors and near misses

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

When a Responsible Pharmacist is signed into the pharmacy record, they must have organisational oversight of the management at that pharmacy premises. This includes how pharmacy services are delivered at or from the pharmacy premises, and how any associated risks are managed. Having strong, clear governance in place is essential to provide safe, effective and good-quality services to patients and the public, and to safeguard their health, safety and wellbeing, as well as that of the pharmacy staff.

Responsible Pharmacists must:

- **Maintain accurate records on the pharmacy's day-to-day operations to ensure transparency and accountability**
- **Oversee and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements**
- **Have oversight of, and make sure that there is effective management of, all pharmacy services and staff working at or from the pharmacy for which they are responsible**
- **Establish and communicate clear lines of reporting, including how to escalate major incidents, concerns and patient safety risks to the Superintendent Pharmacist or pharmacy owner**
- **Make sure staff know, understand and follow the pharmacy's clinical governance framework**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Responsible 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:

- Take part in audits and quality improvement projects, and work with the Superintendent Pharmacist, if there is one, to make sure the team are aware of and participate in them
- Depending on the services provided by the pharmacy premises, maintain accurate records of the day-to-day business carried on at or from the pharmacy premises. This could include dispensing and clinical records
- Develop a process to get feedback from staff and patients, which includes feedback about interventions, errors and incidents. They should make sure that the process is:
    - reviewed regularly
    - appropriately managed, and
    - shared with the Superintendent Pharmacist, or the pharmacy owner if there is no Superintendent Pharmacist
- Make sure the Superintendent Pharmacist (or the pharmacy owner, if there isn't a Superintendent Pharmacist) is aware of any concerns raised under the pharmacy's whistleblowing policy
- Make sure everyone in the pharmacy team knows and understands the procedures in place at the pharmacy premises, and their own duties and responsibilities and those of other members of the team
- Maintain the systems which are in place to anticipate, identify and respond to risks

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- Work with the Superintendent Pharmacist (or the pharmacy owner, if there isn't a Superintendent Pharmacist) to make sure risk assessments are carried out that are specific to the pharmacy premises and team, and that all staff are consulted and involved
- Successfully manage and lessen clinical, safety, environmental and reputational risk
- Build effective relationships and work in partnership with others, including the pharmacy owner, Superintendent Pharmacist and the pharmacy team
- Work with the Superintendent Pharmacist, if there is one, to contribute to the development and review of policies
- If providing services at a distance, including online, make sure that pharmacy staff use the systems in place to confirm the identity of patients requesting medicines
- Regularly review and share with the Superintendent Pharmacist (or the pharmacy owner, if there isn't a Superintendent Pharmacist) all internal and external complaints and concerns.

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