General Pharmaceutical Council

Standards for Superintendent 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 registered 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 legal powers to set standards that describe the role and professional responsibilities of Superintendent Pharmacists, as well as the conduct, ethics and performance expected of them.

These standards for Superintendent Pharmacists apply in England, Scotland and Wales. The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland are responsible for producing the standards for 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 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 Superintendent Pharmacist standards is part of a programme of work designed to strengthen pharmacy governance.

The programme also includes producing professional **standards for Chief Pharmacists**, and rules and professional **standards for Responsible Pharmacists**.

The role of a Superintendent Pharmacist

The Medicines Act 1968 sets out the legal duty of the Superintendent Pharmacist to be responsible for securing the safe and effective running of a retail pharmacy business in connection with the retail sale and supply of medicinal products.

If it is to lawfully own and operate a retail pharmacy business, a 'body corporate' must appoint a Superintendent Pharmacist. A Superintendent Pharmacist must be appointed if:

- a registered pharmacy is owned by a body corporate
- there is a change in ownership of a registered pharmacy, and the new owner is a body corporate, or
- a new Superintendent Pharmacist is replacing a previous Superintendent Pharmacist of an existing body corporate

Criteria

The Medicines Act 1968 sets out the criteria a pharmacist must meet if they are to perform the role of the Superintendent Pharmacist. These must be met in full by all Superintendent Pharmacists.

The Superintendent Pharmacist must:

1. be a pharmacist who maintains their registration with the GPhC, and
2. be a senior manager of the retail pharmacy business who has the authority to make decisions affecting the running of the retail pharmacy business in connection with the retail sale and supply of medicinal products. This includes having a significant role in:
   - making decisions about how the whole or a substantial part of the activities of a retail pharmacy business are managed or organised, or
   - the actual managing or organising of the whole or a substantial part of the activities of a retail pharmacy business, and
3. notify the GPhC in writing confirming their name and that they are the Superintendent Pharmacist for the retail pharmacy business. This notice provided to the GPhC must be signed by the Superintendent Pharmacist and signed on behalf of the retail pharmacy business

The Superintendent Pharmacist therefore must have organisational oversight of, and be professionally responsible for, the management of each individual pharmacy owned by the retail pharmacy business. This includes providing clinical oversight and being accountable for the business's professional management at all times, including outside of business hours. The Superintendent Pharmacist's role involves setting, maintaining and communicating robust standard operating procedures, policies and procedures. This includes setting out within the standard operating procedure how the legislation allowing pharmacists to authorise registered pharmacy technicians to carry out, or supervise others carrying out, the preparation, assembly, dispensing and sale and supply of medicines is applied and recorded in each pharmacy. You can find more information on authorisation and supervision in the standards for Responsible Pharmacists, and in the annex for the standards for pharmacy professionals. The Royal College of Pharmacy has also produced guidance on how to undertake authorisation.

The Superintendent Pharmacist must make sure each individual pharmacy within the retail pharmacy business has appropriate indemnity arrangements in place for all pharmacy services provided.

What to consider before taking on the role of Superintendent Pharmacist

Taking on the role of the Superintendent Pharmacist is a professional responsibility and the Superintendent Pharmacist is directly accountable for meeting these standards. Before taking on the role of Superintendent Pharmacist, pharmacists must use their professional judgement to assess whether they:

- recognise and understand the additional professional and legal responsibilities associated with the role
- have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the responsibilities properly while acting within the limits of their professional competence, and
- have sufficient capacity, resources and support from the owner(s) of the retail pharmacy business or businesses to perform the role safely and effectively

As part of this assessment, pharmacists must consider the context of each individual pharmacy for which they are responsible. This includes:

- the full range of pharmacy services provided, including those provided by a third party, agent or contractor
- how the pharmacy services are delivered – that is, in a traditional in-person way, at a distance, on the internet and so on
- 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 pharmacy services

This is not a one-off assessment made when taking on the role. Superintendent Pharmacists should keep these considerations under review throughout their time in the role, especially when there are significant changes to the pharmacy business, or its services, workforce or operating model.

Performing the Superintendent Pharmacist role for more than one retail pharmacy business

Following changes to the law, a Superintendent Pharmacist can be responsible for retail pharmacy businesses owned and operated by more than one legal entity. This involves being responsible for multiple registered pharmacy businesses with different owners.

If a Superintendent Pharmacist chooses to perform the role in these circumstances, they must make sure they meet these standards. They must also make sure they have the skills, experience, commitment, time and resources in place to carry out their legal, professional and regulatory responsibilities safely and effectively. They must make sure each pharmacy business for which they are responsible operates safely and effectively in providing pharmacy services to patients and the public.

Superintendent Pharmacists responsible for registered pharmacy businesses across different legal entities may encounter a range of issues when performing their role. They need to be satisfied they can effectively manage these issues. These include:

- Different and possibly complex business ownership structures
- Different governance frameworks, including different standard operating procedures, policies and procedures
- Different pharmacy services (including clinical services which involve direct patient care) which may vary by each retail pharmacy business
- Different commercial interests
- Different legal, regulatory and contractual requirements that need to be met across different nations the pharmacy business may operate in

Changes to the Superintendent Pharmacist

Deputising arrangements for temporary absences

The Superintendent Pharmacist is expected to make sure there are appropriate deputising arrangements in place for any periods when

they are absent, for example due to annual leave or sickness.

Extended periods of absence

If a Superintendent Pharmacist is away from work for 28 days or more, for example due to sickness, the Superintendent Pharmacist and the pharmacy owner should discuss – and come to an agreement about – whether the role and responsibilities of the Superintendent Pharmacist and the standards for Superintendent Pharmacists can still be met during this time.

If it is decided that the Superintendent Pharmacist cannot perform their legal and professional responsibilities during an extended period of absence of 28 days or more, the pharmacy owner must nominate a pharmacist(s) to assume the responsibilities of the Superintendent Pharmacist until a replacement is in post.

The pharmacy owner must appoint a replacement Superintendent Pharmacist (on an interim or permanent basis) within 28 days of it being decided that the former Superintendent Pharmacist cannot perform their legal and professional responsibilities because of their extended absence.

Appointing a replacement Superintendent Pharmacist

If a Superintendent Pharmacist leaves their role, the pharmacy owner must nominate a pharmacist(s) to assume the responsibilities of the Superintendent Pharmacist until a replacement is in post.

The pharmacy owner must appoint a replacement Superintendent Pharmacist (on an interim or permanent basis) within 28 days of the former Superintendent Pharmacist leaving their role.

Notification to the GPhC

At all times, the GPhC must be able to identify the Superintendent Pharmacist in charge of a retail pharmacy business. To ensure this, the GPhC must:

- receive written notification signed by both the **pharmacy owner** and **newly appointed Superintendent Pharmacist** no later than 28 days from the date the former Superintendent Pharmacist left the role. This must give the name and registration number of the new Superintendent Pharmacist who has been appointed (whether permanent or interim) on behalf of the retail pharmacy business
- receive written notification from the **former Superintendent Pharmacist** that they have stopped performing the role. Written notice must be received by the GPhC within 28 days from the date the Superintendent Pharmacist stops being the Superintendent Pharmacist for the retail pharmacy business

If a body corporate fails to appoint a Superintendent Pharmacist, this may put the pharmacy's registration at risk

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The standards for Superintendent Pharmacists

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

Superintendent Pharmacists must meet the following standards:

1. **Provide strategic and professional leadership.**
2. **Develop a team 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 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 pharmacy businesses. 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 Superintendent Pharmacists the flexibility to use their professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public. Superintendent Pharmacists must decide how to meet these standards and their other legal and professional responsibilities, while taking account of the requirements of the pharmacies they are responsible for.

The standards are also a statement of what patients and people working with Superintendent 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 Superintendent Pharmacists are all equally important and must be met at all times.

Superintendent 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 Responsible Pharmacist for ensuring:

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

It is therefore vital that pharmacy owners and Responsible Pharmacists are familiar with these standards and that they work together to support the Superintendent 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, Superintendent Pharmacists must also meet the GPhC's **standards for pharmacy professionals** and any other relevant **standards.** They must also

take into account supporting guidance we publish on our website. Superintendent Pharmacists should follow any guidance that applies to them which is produced by other regulatory bodies and inspectorates, for example:

- the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS)
- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and
- the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

Superintendent 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 Superintendent 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 Superintendent Pharmacists to use their professional judgement and make difficult decisions. We expect Superintendent Pharmacists to act in the best interests of patients and the public, and to consider these standards, their legal duties and relevant guidance when making decisions.

How to demonstrate that the standards are being met

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

- during a regulatory inspection discussion
- 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 Superintendent 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 GPhC, CQC, HIS or HIW
- during the regular performance reviews with their line manager

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

Standard 1: Provide strategic and professional leadership

Superintendent Pharmacists have significant responsibilities and influence over the culture and environment of the retail pharmacy business. This includes setting the strategic direction that is needed to maintain the safe and effective delivery of pharmacy services at or from pharmacy premises. Superintendent Pharmacists also provide clinical oversight and professional leadership and management to the pharmacy workforce and support the management and best use of medicines.

Superintendent Pharmacists must:

- **have a clear vision and strategy to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services**
- **lead by example, taking responsibility for their own professional growth and development**
- **influence and work collaboratively with others, to meet the needs of patients and the public, and contribute to shared organisational and system objectives**
- **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**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Superintendent 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:

- Set a positive example for the whole pharmacy workforce including people working towards registration as a pharmacist or pharmacy technician
- Appropriately use research, technology and innovation to enhance safety, and improve services, taking into account the needs and available resources of the pharmacy
- Build effective relationships and work in partnership with stakeholders including the pharmacy owner, Responsible Pharmacist and pharmacy workforce
- Keep up to date with developments in the pharmacy sector and adapt and innovate to meet the changing needs of patients and how pharmacy services are delivered in the context of each individual pharmacy
- Provide professional support and expert pharmacy advice to colleagues, or make sure that the team has access to someone suitable who can provide this
- Empower pharmacy staff to exercise their professional judgement in the interests, and for the safety, of patients and the public
- Empower all pharmacy 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
- Appropriately manage personal and organisational goals, incentives or targets so that their professional judgement, or that of anyone in the pharmacy workforce, is not

compromised in the delivery of safe and effective care

- Demonstrate good decision-making and problem-solving skills and be able to analyse and interpret complex data and information, to positively affect how pharmacy services are delivered
- Develop, implement and communicate the business continuity plans for individual pharmacies, taking into account the requirements, risks and recovery strategies of the pharmacy
- Consider the environmental impact of pharmacy services and the role of the pharmacy in supporting sustainable healthcare, identifying opportunities to reduce the pharmacy's environmental footprint without compromising safe and effective care

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

The Superintendent Pharmacist is responsible for making sure the whole pharmacy workforce, including unregistered staff, provide safe and effective care and pharmacy services. The skill mix needed at each pharmacy will depend on the needs of patients and the public, which may change over time. Superintendent Pharmacists need to be aware of these changing needs, as well as changes to the way services are delivered, and develop a workforce with the right skills, knowledge and experience. Superintendent Pharmacists need to work with the Responsible Pharmacist to continually assess staffing levels and the appropriateness of the skill mix within the context of each individual pharmacy and in line with changing services, workload, and feedback, to ensure patient safety.

For information about the appointment of a new Superintendent Pharmacist when a Superintendent Pharmacist:

- leaves their role, or
- is not able to perform their legal and professional responsibilities for an extended period of absence of 28 days or more,

please see the section 'Changes to the Superintendent Pharmacist' above.

Superintendent Pharmacists must:

- **have systems in place to work with the Responsible Pharmacist to assess and identify the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the delivery of safe and effective pharmacy services in**

each of the pharmacies for which they are responsible

- **have systems in place for Responsible Pharmacists to raise concerns, escalate risks, and seek support**
- **make the best use of resources, and get the right skill mix to deliver safe and effective pharmacy services**
- **have appropriate deputising arrangements in place for any periods when the Superintendent Pharmacist is absent, for example due to annual leave or sickness**
- **make sure there is succession and contingency planning for key leadership roles like the Superintendent Pharmacist and Responsible Pharmacist so that they can be filled without affecting patient safety**
- **value pharmacy staff and support their health and wellbeing**
- **create and maintain a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion where:**
  - **people (including pharmacy staff, patients and the public) are treated as equals, and with dignity and respect, and**
  - **pharmacy staff meet their own legal responsibilities under equality and human rights legislation, while respecting diversity and cultural differences**
- **develop a safe culture where pharmacy staff feel confident and supported to challenge behaviours such as discrimination, bullying and harassment**
- **make sure that pharmacy staff feel confident and supported to speak up when they have concerns or things go wrong**
- **promote a culture of continuous learning and development where pharmacy staff feel safe to report errors and near misses, and can learn from them**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Superintendent 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:

- Encourage pharmacy staff to work collaboratively, including with other healthcare professionals
- Empower pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to use their professional judgement when supervising and authorising the preparation, assembly, dispensing and the sale or supply of medicines
- Develop and review organisational workforce policies, procedures and training requirements – for example, around equality, diversity and inclusion, such as those on building 'cultural competence'
- Develop and promote policies and procedures that support pharmacy 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

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- Understand the role and responsibilities involved in undertaking the tutoring, mentoring and supervision of trainee pharmacists and trainee pharmacy technicians
- Develop recruitment and retention strategies, as well as succession and contingency planning, to manage staffing levels in the context of each individual pharmacy and ensure key leadership roles can be appropriately filled in a timely manner
- Make sure that pharmacy staff maintain and develop their competence – for example, through training, carrying out CPD, and coaching and mentoring. Make sure that unregistered pharmacy staff are enrolled on any education and training courses needed to meet the competency level needed for their role
- Keep training records and up-to-date education and training plans for all pharmacy staff, including when innovation and new technologies are introduced
- Allow all pharmacy staff access to appropriate rest breaks, and adequate protected time to carry out training and induction, or to meet development needs
- Make sure regular development reviews are carried out to identify gaps in skills, knowledge and experience so that necessary actions can be taken, such as developing a training strategy
- Make sure systems are in place so that the workforce can provide feedback and suggestions – for example, about the need for additional training
- Identify good practice and share it with all relevant pharmacy staff
- Make sure staff in their organisation know who the Superintendent Pharmacist is and can contact them, if required

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

Superintendent Pharmacists have wide-ranging responsibilities and often need to delegate to make sure services are delivered safely and effectively. To make sure this happens, Superintendent Pharmacists must delegate responsibly. As senior leaders when delegating, Superintendent Pharmacists are responsible and accountable for making sure lines of accountability are clear. Details of delegation must be recorded, including who is accountable and responsible. Records must be kept up to date and reflect any changes in delegated responsibilities or the staff involved. This will reduce errors and foster a culture of transparency and accountability.

Superintendent Pharmacists must:

- **provide clarity about the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the pharmacy team**
- **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**
- **put procedures in place to make sure that when tasks are delegated, the person 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 delegated**
- **communicate effectively and record delegation decisions accurately**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Superintendent 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 appropriate resources are in place so that pharmacy staff can carry out tasks effectively
- Offer training and ongoing support to pharmacy staff to perform their new responsibilities
- Allow pharmacy 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, experience or training, or
    - lack confidence in their ability to assume that level of responsibility
- Make sure pharmacy staff are aware of their responsibilities and those of others in the team, and the governance and reporting structures

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

Superintendent Pharmacists must have organisational oversight of the management and operation of the pharmacy or pharmacies they are Superintendent Pharmacist of, including:

- the management of medicines, medical devices or any other product intended for supply or administration, and
- how all pharmacy services are delivered

These services can include:

- prescribing and clinical services where direct care is provided to patients
- services provided by a third party, and
- unregulated services linked to the pharmacy

A key part of the Superintendent Pharmacist's role is to establish, strengthen and maintain clear governance. This includes setting, maintaining and communicating robust standard operating procedures, policies and procedures – including how authorisations to carry out or supervise tasks are given, recorded, changed, withdrawn or revoked in each pharmacy. The standard operating procedure for authorisations needs to specifically set out the requirement that authorisations must be accurately recorded in writing on the day they are given. You can find more information on authorisation and supervision in the standards for Responsible Pharmacists and in the annex for the standards for pharmacy professionals.

The Royal College of Pharmacy has also produced guidance on how to use authorisation**.**

Superintendent Pharmacists are also responsible for the effective management of clinical, safety, financial and reputational risk across all the pharmacy services provided. They must anticipate, identify, monitor and respond to risks at both a local and organisation level. Risk assessments must consider the circumstances of each pharmacy, including:

- the staff working in it
- the pharmacy services provided, and
- the activities of third parties, agents or contractors

Superintendent Pharmacists must review and update risk assessments whenever services change, or when new risks are identified.

Superintendent Pharmacists must:

- **Identify and manage the risks associated with providing all pharmacy services, including those provided at a distance**
- **Have oversight of – and make sure that there are standard operating procedures in place for – the effective management of all pharmacy services**
- **Keep and maintain all the necessary records for the safe provision of pharmacy services**
- **Make sure there are procedures in place to obtain and document consent for the pharmacy services being delivered**
- **Make sure regular audits and incident reviews are carried out on all the services provided, including any clinical services,**

and that any recommendations are actioned

- **Establish and communicate clear lines of reporting**
- **Make sure there is a process to get feedback from pharmacy staff, patients and the public – which includes feedback about interventions, errors and incidents – and that the process is reviewed regularly and appropriately managed**
- **Take appropriate steps to deal with concerns that have been raised, and if necessary, escalate to the appropriate body, including to us**
- **Manage information to protect the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of patients and the public who receive pharmacy services**
- **Make sure medicines, medical devices and any other products intended for supply or administration are:**
  - **obtained from a reputable source**
  - **safe and fit for purpose**
  - **stored securely**
  - **safeguarded from unauthorised access**
  - **supplied to the patient safely**
  - **disposed of safely and securely**

Examples of how to meet this standard

Here are some examples of how Superintendent 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:

- Regularly assess and review the safety and quality of the pharmacy services provided – including those provided by a third-party business, agent or contractor
- Have oversight of – and contribute to – the development and review of policies and standard operating procedures
- Make sure the necessary records are kept and are up to date, accurate and stored in line with the information security policy
- Plan and use resources effectively, considering any environmental impact alongside any financial, audit and budgetary requirements
- Have systems in place to anticipate, identify and respond to risks, making sure pharmacy staff can contribute to identifying and managing risks and understand the outcome of risk assessments
- Make sure everyone in the pharmacy workforce knows and understands the procedures in place, as well as their own duties and responsibilities and those of others
- Make sure pharmacy staff know how to handle private information and have a working knowledge of data protection requirements and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Regularly review and act on internal and external complaints and concerns, including any concerns raised under a whistleblowing policy
- Make sure the details of the Superintendent Pharmacist are visible on any digital platforms used, to help patients and the

public know who has oversight for their safety and care when using the pharmacy

- If providing services at a distance, including online, make sure there are systems in place to confirm the identity of patients requesting medicines and to identify inappropriate requests for medicines

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