

## **MAKING COMPLAINTS ABOUT PHARMACISTS, PHARMACIES AND OWNERS OF PHARMACIES REGISTERED IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

**This leaflet tells you what you can do if you, or someone close to you, is unhappy about the way you have been treated by a pharmacist in Northern Ireland. It is the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland's job to ensure that all pharmacists care for you properly. If they don't, we need to hear about it, find out what happened and do something about it.**

### **ABOUT US**

We are the regulatory body for pharmacists. Our primary focus is patient safety and ensuring that patients receive quality care from pharmacists. All pharmacists who practise in Northern Ireland must be registered with us.

All pharmacies are inspected by the Pharmacy Inspectors of the Department of Health, (DH) with whom we work closely. We are responsible for ensuring that all pharmacists, working in hospitals or community pharmacies, pharmacy owners and pharmacy superintendents adhere to our code of ethics and the laws relating to medicines and poisons.

A pharmacist's prime concern, wherever they work, must be for the well-being and safety of patients and the public.

### **WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM A PHARMACIST?**

You can expect that pharmacists will:

- Be properly trained, qualified and have up to date knowledge and skills;
- Act in the best interest of the patient and the public;
- Always treat you with respect and dignity;
- Never do anything to harm you;
- Keep their relationship with you on a professional level at all times.

### **WHAT CAN WE INVESTIGATE?**

- Complaints about the professional service provided by a pharmacist /pharmacy at all levels of healthcare e.g. a dispensing error, wrong labelling, or out of date medicine supplied;
- Complaints about the conduct of a pharmacist, e.g. unprofessional behaviour;
- Complaints against owners of pharmacies, including companies and pharmacy chains.

## WHAT DO NOT INVESTIGATE?

- Claims for compensation;
- Complaints regarding other health professionals, but we will signpost you to the relevant body (see also other Regulators at the end of this leaflet);
- Employment issues e.g. hours of work, contracts;
- Non-medical products e.g. faulty hairsprays etc;
- Contractual issues, e.g. hours of opening, charges for private prescriptions.

## WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

In the first instance you should speak to the pharmacist regarding your complaint so that your concerns can be dealt with locally if possible.

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, and it is about medicines or services you received as a Health Service patient, you can also complain to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB).

Health and Social Care Board Headquarters  
12-22 Linenhall Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8BS  
Tel: 028 9032 1313  
Email: [complaints.hscb@hscni.net](mailto:complaints.hscb@hscni.net)

There are also many organisations responsible for looking into concerns patients raise. The Patient and Client Council will help you to complain about any part of health and social care. Tel: 0800917 0222 or visit [www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net](http://www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net)

If you wish to receive advice or assistance with a claim for compensation you may seek professional help from a solicitor or Citizen's Advice Bureau [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

## HOW DO I RAISE A CONCERN WITH THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY?

Complaints should be made as soon as possible after the event. Please send your complaint including relevant evidence where possible

either:

1. In writing to the:  
Complaint's Officer  
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, 73 University Street, Belfast,  
BT7 1HL or;
2. By email [complaints@psni.org.uk](mailto:complaints@psni.org.uk) or;
3. By fax 028 9043 9919

Please include:

- ✓ Your name and address;
- ✓ Daytime telephone number on which you may be contacted;
- ✓ Name and address of pharmacy / pharmacist concerned;
- ✓ Brief outline of your complaint;
- ✓ Date of the incident;
- ✓ Whether any harm has been caused;
- ✓ Any other action you have taken to resolve the complaint;
- ✓ Please do not send any evidence or medicines to us.

Don't worry if you are unsure about whether to complain or not please telephone (Tel: 028 9032 6927) and one of our staff will discuss your concerns with you.

## **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU HAVE MADE A COMPLAINT?**

### **RESPOND TO YOUR COMPLAINT**

- We will write to you, within 5 working days of receiving your complaint to confirm that it has been received.
- If a complaint is raised anonymously or you decide that you do not want to pursue a complaint, it is unlikely that the complaint will proceed.

### **INVESTIGATING YOUR COMPLAINT**

- Fitness to practise, including the receipt and processing of complaints, concerns and incidents are the responsibility of the Registrar. The Registrar will carry out an initial screening of your complaint, assess the case against the threshold criteria and will consider if any further referral is required. We may request additional information from you.
- We will also notify the pharmacist concerned that we have received information and are investigating a complaint about them. They are given 28 days to respond.
- Where the matter does not meet the published referral criteria, then the case is closed by the Registrar. Decisions to close cases are all subject to review.

### **REFERRAL OF YOUR COMPLAINT**

- The Registrar may refer the complaint to the Health and Social Care Board or to the DH Inspectorate. A member of the DH Inspectorate may contact you and decide to discuss your complaint with you, and to obtain any necessary further information or evidence.
- Following investigation where the matter is determined 'serious' your complaint may be formally referred to a Scrutiny or Statutory Committee for further investigation. This may result in an evidential hearing.

## WHAT CAN THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DO?

The Scrutiny Committee [a Legal chair, a pharmacist, a lay person] meets in private and it does not hear oral evidence. It considers initial allegations on a file of evidence which is paper based and depending on the outcome of the case, the Committee may:

- Dismiss the case
- Issue advice
- Issue warning(s)
- Agree undertaking(s)
- Refer the case to the Statutory Committee

## WHAT CAN THE STATUTORY COMMITTEE DO?

A case may be referred to a Statutory Committee [a Legal chair, a pharmacist, a lay person] directly by the Registrar or by a Scrutiny Committee. This Statutory Committee considers cases at public hearings, like a tribunal (except for a health-related case). Pharmacists involved are invited to make representations with legal support if necessary. Depending on the investigation and outcome of the case the Statutory Committee may:

- Issue advice
- Issue warning(s)
- Impose conditions on the registrants practice
- Suspend the registrant from the register
- Remove the registrants name from the register

## INTERIM ORDER

If the Statutory Committee considers it is necessary for the protection of the public, in the public interest, or in the interests of the pharmacy professional involved in your complaint, they may make an interim order for suspension from the register or apply conditions to the pharmacist's registration. Interim order hearings are always held in private.

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AUTHORITY (PSA)

PSA is an organisation that promotes best practice and consistency in regulating healthcare professionals by the nine healthcare regulatory bodies, including us. All decisions of the Statutory Committee are automatically sent to PSA for audit.

If PSA considers any decision taken by the Statutory Committee to be 'unduly lenient' it has the power to refer it to the High Court.

## OTHER UK BASED HEALTHCARE REGULATORS

We cannot consider complaints against the health and social care professionals outlined in the table below. The organisations that can consider these complaints are listed below:

Profession	Regulator	Phone	Website
Chiropractors	General Chiropractic Council	020 7713 5155	<a href="http://www.gcc-uk.org">www.gcc-uk.org</a>
Other health and social care professionals	Health and Care Professions Council	0845 300 6184	<a href="http://www.hpc-uk.org">www.hpc-uk.org</a>
Doctors	General Medical Council	0845 357 8001	<a href="http://www.gmc.org">www.gmc.org</a>
Dentists (clinical dental technicians, dental hygienists, dental nurses, dental technicians, dental therapists, and orthodontic therapists)	General Dental Council	020 7167 6000	<a href="http://www.gdc-uk.org">www.gdc-uk.org</a>
Nurses and midwives	Nursing and Midwifery Council	020 7637 7181	<a href="http://www.nmc.org">www.nmc.org</a>
Opticians (optometrists and dispensing opticians)	General Optical Council	020 7580 3898	<a href="http://www.optical.org">www.optical.org</a>
Osteopaths	General Osteopathic Council	020 7357 6655	<a href="http://www.oesteopathy.org">www.oesteopathy.org</a>
Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales	General Pharmaceutical Council	020 3365 3400	<a href="http://www.pharmacyregulation.org">www.pharmacyregulation.org</a>
Social care workers, qualified social workers, and social work students in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC)	028 9536 2600	<a href="http://www.niscc.info">www.niscc.info</a>

## HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY NI

You can make a complaint to us if you are not happy with the way we have handled your complaint and the service we provide. However, our complaints procedure does not apply to the decision of the fitness to practise committee and the outcome of the case.

We ask that you contact the person who provided the service; in this way we hope to resolve your problem informally. If you remain dissatisfied with our performance, we want you to feel comfortable about making a formal complaint.

To make a complaint about the Pharmaceutical Society NI, please send your complaint either:

1. In writing to Complaint's Manager, Pharmaceutical Society NI, 73 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HL or;
2. By email to [complaints@psni.org.uk](mailto:complaints@psni.org.uk) or;
3. By facsimile to 028 90439919
4. If you would rather make your complaint by telephone, please contact the office on 028 9032 6927

Please visit our website for further details on how to make a complaint about the Pharmaceutical Society NI <http://www.psni.org.uk/about/complaints-2/>