

Joint statement from Chief Executives of statutory regulators of health and social care professionals - January 2021

In March last year, at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we issued a statement to support our registrants in dealing with the un-precedented challenges that they were facing. As the pandemic continues, we know that health and social care professionals continue to work in very difficult situations and under extreme pressures. We want to thank all health and social care professionals for the care they have continued to provide to patients and those who use health and social care services through these very difficult and challenging circumstances.

With the production and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines underway, some of our registrants are leading the effort to vaccinate people as quickly as possible, while others continue to play a vital role in helping to treat and care for people with coronavirus and to contain its spread. We know that the current surge in cases means that all health and social care professionals are likely to face an increased burden, and they may continue to have concerns about decisions they need to take in order to provide the best care in challenging circumstances.

When the pandemic began last year, we as professional regulators across the UK, set out how we would carry out our roles during this time. We would like to set out our approach again in the following joint statement, which re-iterates the principles we said we would rely upon, and will continue to rely upon as the pandemic continues.

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We hold the registers of health and social care professionals in the UK. We support those professionals to deliver better, safer care by setting the standards they need to meet, to act in the best interests of patients and people who use health and social care services at all times.

As registered professionals, the first concern of the individuals on our registers will be the care of their patients and people who use health and social care services. We encourage health and social care professionals, working in partnership with each other and people using services, to use their professional judgement to assess risk and to deliver safe care informed by any relevant guidance and the values and principles set out in their professional standards.

We recognise that in highly challenging circumstances, professionals may need to depart from established procedures in order to care for patients and people using health and social care services. Our regulatory standards are designed to be flexible and to provide a framework for decision-making in a wide range of situations. They support professionals by highlighting the key principles which should be followed,

including the need to work cooperatively with colleagues to keep people safe, to practise in line with the best available evidence, to recognise and work within the limits of their competence, and to have appropriate indemnity arrangements relevant to their practice.

We recognise that the individuals on our registers may feel anxious about how context is taken into account when concerns are raised about their decisions and actions in very challenging circumstances. Where a concern is raised about a registered professional, it will always be considered on the specific facts of the case, taking into account the factors relevant to the environment in which the professional is working. We would also take account of any relevant information about resource, guidelines or protocols in place at the time.

We will continue to issue profession specific guidance to our registrants to provide additional support where that is needed.

The statutory health and care regulators that have agreed to this statement are:

General Chiropractic Council
General Medical Council
General Optical Council
General Osteopathic Council
General Pharmaceutical Council
Health and Care Professions Council
Nursing and Midwifery Council
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland
Social Work England