



Health Professionals' Fitness to Practise

Most health professions have a regulatory body which maintains a register of those qualified to work in that professional capacity in the United Kingdom. The best known is the General Medical Council (GMC) for doctors, but details of all of them are given with this leaflet. Part of a regulatory body's role is to investigate serious complaints about individual professionals to establish whether they are 'fit to practise'. It is important to note that it is not the role of regulatory bodies to investigate complaints which might be serious, but do not call into question a health professional's fitness to practise. These complaints should be dealt with under the complaints procedures for the NHS or private healthcare explained in other leaflets.

Issues which may require action by a regulatory body include:

- Serious professional misconduct.
- Criminal offences.
- Repeated poor performance calling into question the professional's competence.
- Health problems such as addictions or mental illness.

How to complain to a regulatory body:

As with any complaint, it is best made in writing. Be specific as to why the professional may not be fit to practise, and include any relevant correspondence and evidence.

What happens next?

Each organisation has its own procedures, but will normally follow a similar pattern consisting of:

- Screening the complaint to check whether it is a fitness to practise issue and whether any urgent action is needed pending further investigation
- If the issue is found to call into question a professional's fitness to practise, referral to a committee dealing with disciplinary matters.
- A formal hearing.

In cases that proceed to a formal hearing, the complainant may be called as a witness and can be cross-examined by a lawyer acting on behalf of the health professional.

Sanctions available to the regulatory body include:

- Removal from the register, in the most serious cases.
- Temporary suspension from the register, or in some cases restrictions as to what a professional can do within their profession.
- Directions to take certain training.

Contact Details for the Regulatory Bodies:

Doctors: The General Medical Council
178 Great Portland Street
London
WC1N 6JE
Tel 0845 357 0022
www.gmc-uk.org

Nurses: The Nursing and Midwifery Council
23 Portland Place
London
W1B 1PZ
Advice line: 020 7462 5810/5811
Website: www.nmc-uk.org

Dentists: The General Dental Council
37 Wimpole Street
London
W1G 8DG

Tel: 020 7887 3800
Fax: 020 7224 3294
e-mail: complaints@gdc-uk.org
website: www.gdc-uk.org

Opticians: General Optical Council
41 Harley Street
London
W1N 2DJ
Tel: 020 7580 3898
e-mail: goc@optical.org.uk
website: wwwoptical.org

Chiropractics: General Chiropractic Council
44 Wicklow Street
London
WC1X 9HL

Tel: 020 7713 5155
e-mail: regulation@gcc-uk.org
website: www.gcc-uk.org

Osteopaths: General Osteopathic Council
176 Tower Bridge Road
London
SE1 3LU
Tel: 020 7357 6655
e-mail: info@osteopathy.org
website: www.osteopathy.org.uk

Pharmacists: Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
1 Lambeth High Street
London
SE1 7JN
Tel: 020 7735 9141
e-mail: enquiries@rpsgb.org
website: www.rpsgb.org.uk

Other Health Professions Council
Professions*: Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU
Tel: 020 7582 0866
e-mail: legal@hpc-uk.org
website: www.hpc-uk.org

* The Health Professions Council regulates Arts Therapists; Biomedical Scientists; Chiropodists and Podiatrists; Clinical Scientists; Dietitians; Occupational Therapists; Orthoptists; Paramedics; Physiotherapists; Prosthetists and Orthotists; Radiographers; Speech and Language Therapists.

AvMA 06/07