

Health professionals' fitness to practise

This self-help guide contains all the information you should wish to make a complaint about a health professional's fitness to practise.

If you have any further questions, please visit our website www.avma.org.uk/help-advice where you will find more advice and a range of specialised self-help guides, or call our helpline.

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The **charity** for patient safety and justice


AvMA is the charity for patient safety and justice. We provide specialist advice and support to people when things go wrong in healthcare and campaign to improve patient safety and justice.


For advice and information visit **www.avma.org.uk**

Or call our helpline
*10am-3.30pm Monday-Friday
(03 calls cost no more than calls to geographic numbers (01 or 02) and must be included in inclusive minutes or there can be a cost per minute)*

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Registered charity in England & Wales (299123) and Scotland (SCO39683)

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

- 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

Useful links

The General Medical Council (GMC), Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) have provided some helpful information which provide good starting points for making complaints about healthcare practitioners.

The GMC's leaflet on how to complain about a doctor

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/concerns>

The NMC's leaflet on how to complain about nurses and midwives

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/concerns-nurses-midwives/>

The HCPC's information on how to complain about other allied healthcare professionals

www.hcpc-uk.org/concerns

Contact details for the regulatory bodies

Complaints about doctors

General Medical Council

Regent's Place, 350 Euston Road, London NW1 3JN
Tel: 0161 923 6602
Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org
Web: www.gmc-uk.org

Complaints about nurses or midwives

Nursing and Midwifery Council

23 Portland Place, London W1B 1PZ
Tel: 020 7462 5800 or 5801
Email: newreferrals@nmc-uk.org
Web: www.nmc.org.uk

Complaints about dentists

General Dental Council

37 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8DQ
Tel: 0207 167 6000
Email: information@gdc-uk.org
Web: www.gdc-uk.org

Complaints about opticians

General Optical Council

41 Harley Street, London W1G 8DJ
Tel: 020 7580 3898
Email: goc@optical.org
Web: www.optical.org

Complaints about pharmacists

Royal Pharmaceutical Society

66-68 East Smithfield, London E1W 1AW
Tel: 0207 572 2737
Email: support@pharms.com
Web: www.rpharms.com

Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland

73 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HL
Tel: 028 9032 6927
Email: info@psni.org.uk
Web: www.psni.org.uk

Complaints about chiropractors

General Chiropractic Council

44 Wicklow Street, London WC1X 9HL
Tel: 020 7713 5155
Email: regulation@gcc-uk.org
Web: www.gcc-uk.org

Complaints about osteopaths

General Osteopathic Council

176 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 3LU
Tel: 020 7357 6655
Email: regulation@osteopathy.org.uk
Web: www.osteopathy.org.uk

Complaints about other allied healthcare professionals

Including Arts Therapists; Biomedical Scientists; Chiropodists and Podiatrists; Clinical Scientists; Dietitians; Occupational Therapists; Orthoptists; Paramedics; Physiotherapists; Prosthetists and Orthotists; Radiographers; Speech and Language Therapists.

Health & Care Professions Council

184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU
Tel: 0300 500 6184
Email: ftp@hcpc-uk.org
Web: www.hcpc-uk.org

Other healthcare regulatory bodies

Care Quality Commission

Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA
Tel: 03000 616161
Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk
Web: www.cqc.org.uk

Professional Standards Authority

157 -197 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SP
Tel: 020 7389 8030
Email: info@professionalstandards.org.uk
Web: www.professionalstandards.org.uk

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency

10 South Colonnade, Canary Wharf, London E14 4PU
Tel: 020 3080 6000
Email: info@mhra.gov.uk
Web: www.mhra.gov.uk

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better patient safety and justice

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£10/month could help train a volunteer helpline advisor

£50/month could help support a family through an inquest hearing

Benefits of membership

- Regular newsletter keeping you up-to-date with our work
- Invitations to special events
- Share your thoughts on our work and policy issues

Your help could make a real difference to patient safety in the UK

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patient safety and justice

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