

BY E-MAIL

Rt Hon Steve Brine MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

18 September 2023

Dear Mr Brine,

Fitness to practise timeliness at the General Pharmaceutical Council

On 25 September, we will publish our review of the performance of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) in the year 2022/23. We are concerned about how long the GPhC takes to progress and close complaints against registrants through its fitness to practise process, and the backlog of older cases that has now built up. I am writing to you on behalf of the Professional Standard Authority's (PSA) Board to inform you of the action we are taking. I attach a copy of our report.

As you know, the PSA reports to Parliament each year on the performance of the 10 statutory health and social care regulators of professionals.¹ We judge a regulator's performance against our 18 [Standards of Good Regulation](#), which cover the four key regulatory functions of guidance and standards, education and training, registration and fitness to practise. Each Standard is assessed as being 'met' or 'not met'.

The GPhC has not met our Standard for fitness to practise timeliness since 2018/19, despite taking various measures to try and improve its performance. It launched a five-year fitness to practise strategy in July 2021, and this year has created a Fitness to Practise Standards Board, chaired by its Chief Executive, to try to improve performance in this area. The GPhC has made addressing delays in the fitness to practise process its highest rated corporate risk and both its Council and Audit and Risk Committee are monitoring performance.

¹ These are the General Chiropractic Council, the General Dental Council, the General Medical Council, the General Optical Council, the General Osteopathic Council, the General Pharmaceutical Council, the Health and Care Professions Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland and Social Work England.

We recognise the GPhC's commitment to improving its fitness to practise process and are pleased to report that it has met two of our other fitness to practise Standards for the first time since 2017/18. However, the GPhC's work has had little impact in this review period in terms of timeliness, and the number of open cases more than a year old has increased again, from 298 to 430. In light of these persistent problems and the growth of the backlog, the PSA's Board has concluded that further action is required.

We will be closely monitoring the GPhC's work to improve the timeliness of its fitness to practise process so that we can understand its progress and raise concerns if its work does not appear to be effective. We will continue to engage with the GPhC and other stakeholders to understand whether its performance is improving. We will report to you on progress until our concerns are resolved.

I am writing in similar terms to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroline Corby".

Caroline Corby
Chair

Copy to:

Gisela Abbam, Chair, General Pharmaceutical Council

Duncan Rudkin, Chief Executive and Registrar, General Pharmaceutical Council