

Layla Moran MP
Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee

By email: hsccom@parliament.uk

07 May 2026

Dear Layla Moran,

Regulatory performance at the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)

Further to my letter of 23 September 2025, I am writing to provide an update on the GPhC's progress towards meeting the Professional Standards Authority's (PSA) 18 standards of good regulation, in particular, Standard 15, often referred to as the timeliness standard.

Since 2024 we have been delivering a comprehensive improvement programme and as a result have redesigned our processes and introduced a range of efficiency measures as well as recruiting and training additional staff. Despite significant increases in demand, we are now seeing improved performance and the closure of many of our older 'legacy' cases, including reducing the number of open cases over two years old by over 45 per cent.

However, the final resolution of those older cases will continue to impact on our median timescale, which is one of the key measures used by the PSA when assessing regulatory performance against their Standards. This means we will not meet that standard in the current review period and there remains a challenge of our meeting it by June 2027.

I did, however, want to update you on the significant progress that has been made, and the work we continue to do to improve the overall timeliness of our fitness to practise function and broader enforcement activity.

Our commitment

The GPhC is committed to improving our fitness to practise processes and making investigations more streamlined and proportionate. Alongside the work undertaken to improve our timeliness, we have also made significant improvements within our inspectorate function.

We have undertaken significant quality improvement work, making the best use of our finite resources to achieve our 2025-2026 strategic aim; we undertook almost 2000 pharmacy premises inspections, an increase of 35 per cent compared to the previous year, and the highest since before the pandemic. We had over 5,500 regulatory contacts, an increase of 23 per cent against the previous year and this was with 28 per cent of our registered premises. I hope you will agree that this is quite remarkable given our reduced capacity and a 19 per cent increase in intelligence referrals over the same period.

We continue to develop and embed a comprehensive improvement programme to improve the progression and resolution of investigations - in particular our legacy older cases - and to improve the efficiency of how we manage our investigations and hearings.

The PSA has already recognised the positive impact of these and that the sustained improvement will take time to bed in and be fully realised.

Our progress

Since I last updated you, we have seen further improvements in our productivity and timeliness and are confident that the changes implemented are sustainable and indicative of lasting improvement.

Over the last year, and against a backdrop of a further 25 per cent increase in concerns being raised with us, we have

- Reduced the backlog of concerns awaiting a triage assessment by 14 per cent
- Improved the median time taken to resolve a case at investigation by almost five months
- Increased the number of hearings resolved at the fitness to practise committee by 30 per cent
- Reduced the number of open cases over three years old by just under 30 per cent

As we have previously explained - and which has been acknowledged by the PSA - as we progress these aged cases to a final resolution at a higher rate, there will be a natural but detrimental impact on our median timeliness which is shown in the increases in this area. This will continue until we have resolved the remaining aged cases which we accept cannot happen this year and, given the timing of the PSA's reporting for the Council, will be challenging to achieve for 2027.

Our primary focus over the next year will be to resolve our legacy aged caseload and we have an ambitious programme of initiatives in place to achieve this. In our delivery plan we have committed to further increasing our final hearing resolutions by 50 percent along with reducing the investigations that have been open for more than two years by over 30 per cent. We want to ensure there are no live investigations over four years old save where we may have to await the outcome of a third-party investigation. We are committed to ensuring that at least 80 percent of our new concerns are investigated within 40 weeks and although masked by the progression and resolution of our legacy caseload, indications are that although challenging, sustained progress has been made in the area.

To underpin our progress and provide more accurate projections, we are developing a forecasting model to provide a forward-looking view of how the fitness to practise caseload is likely to evolve over time and the implications this has for timeliness. The model is designed to show how changes in case volumes, productivity, and hearing schedules affect caseload at different stages of the Fitness to Practise process, and how this impacts the age of cases closed through a hearing.

Our monitoring and assurance

I can assure you that the Council continues to hold the executive to account as we work towards achieving all PSA Standards but particularly those relating to timeliness. We recognise the impact this has on our registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians as well as on public confidence in our regulatory function.

Our Council and sub committees, including Audit and Risk, Finance and Planning and People and Culture continue to scrutinise performance against our objectives regularly and our Chief Executive continues to ensure we have the necessary cross organisational challenge and support towards our meeting, sustaining, and ultimately exceeding the reasonable expectations set of us. We will provide further a further update on progress, following publication of the PSA's review in late Autumn.

Please do let us know if you would like any more information at any point about our ongoing work to improve our performance.

We have written in similar terms to Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Abbam'.

Gisela Abbam Hon FBSA, FRSA
Chair

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Copy to: Caroline Corby, PSA Chair