



Snapshot

Annual review of performance 2018/19



Regulator reviewed: **Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland**

Key facts & figures:

- regulates the practice of **pharmacists** and also registers **pharmacy premises** in **Northern Ireland**
- **2,764** professionals on register, 552 pharmacies (as at 31 March 2020)
- **£398** annual fee for registration (£155 for pharmacies)

Standards of good regulation

Core functions

Annual performance review 2018/19

Met

(number of Standards)

Guidance & Standards

4/4

Education & Training

4/4

Registration

6/6

Fitness to Practise

8/10

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Focus on: **Activities and actions demonstrating how the PSNI is meeting the Standards**

Our review of the PSNI's performance began before the Coronavirus pandemic struck the UK (and covers November 2018 to October 2019). The PSNI has met 22 out of 24 of our Standards of Good Regulation. It has not met Standard 5 or Standard 7 for Fitness to Practise. The PSNI is the final regulator to be assessed against our previous Standards of Good Regulation. We began using our new Standards in our 2019/20 performance review cycle so they will be applied to the PSNI's next review.

REGISTRATION: THE PROCESS IS FAIR AND TRANSPARENT

We carried out a targeted review to obtain further information about an interview process used by the PSNI for registering applicants first registered in the EEA. The PSNI's legislation does not enable it to refuse registration on the basis of concerns about an applicant's knowledge of English. To address this, if potential concerns are identified about an applicant's communication skills, the PSNI may invite the applicant to attend a voluntary interview. If the interview confirms there are concerns, the applicant may be referred to the fitness to practise process upon their registration. The process that was described to us did not involve clearly telling applicants the purpose of the interview or that it may result in a fitness to practise referral. We did not consider this to be fair or transparent. We were also concerned by the absence of guidance for making decisions on who is invited for interview or when a fitness to practise referral should be made. It was only because the PSNI has not used the process this year, and the remainder of the registration process continues to be generally efficient, that we decided that this Standard is met this year.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: QUALITY-ASSURANCE OF EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The PSNI works with the GPhC, its equivalent regulator in Great Britain, in a number of areas, including the quality assurance of education programmes. Each regulator sets and administers a pre-registration examination in their own jurisdiction. During the period under review, the two regulators developed a joint UK-wide examination which will be primarily managed by the GPhC. The PSNI recognised that this change may affect its involvement with the quality assurance of its pre-registration programme and reached a partnership agreement with the GPhC which ensures it maintains sufficient oversight of, and involvement with, key aspects of the examination, including quality assurance. The first sitting of the joint examination is due to take place in June 2021.

REGISTRATION: REGISTRANTS MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS REQUIRED TO STAY FIT TO PRACTISE

The PSNI finalised its new CPD framework this year and publicly consulted on it between October 2019 and January 2020. The pass mark will increase from 40 per cent of cycles to 50 per cent of both cycles and hours and the number of assessment criteria will be reduced from nine to six. The new framework was due to come into effect on 1 June 2020 for the 2020-21 CPD year but it has been deferred by a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: THE PROCESS IS TRANSPARENT AND FAIR AND PARTIES ARE KEPT UPDATED AND SUPPORTED TO PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY IN THE PROCESS

We audited all of the cases closed by the PSNI at the initial stages of its fitness to practise process during the period under review. We decided the PSNI has not met two of the 10 Fitness to Practise Standards because our audit found that:

- processes were not always fully and clearly explained to the parties
- decisions and their accompanying reasons were not recorded contemporaneously
- the jurisdictional test applied by the PSNI at initial screening was not explained to the parties
- parties were not usually told that the jurisdictional test had been met/not met
- parties were not kept informed of the progress of their case, what the next steps would be or what the possible outcomes were at each stage.

We also identified an apparent disparity between the level of information provided to registrants and that provided to complainants. The PSNI told us that verbal communications were not always documented. This meant we could not establish whether parties were provided with sufficient and transparent information to enable them to understand the process and participate in it effectively.