

SRA response

General Pharmaceutical Council's consultation on standards for pharmacy professionals

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Read more about the General Pharmaceutical Council's consultation on standards for pharmacy professionals

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the General Pharmaceutical Council's consultation on standards for pharmacy professionals.

The SRA is the regulator of solicitors and law firms in England and Wales, protecting consumers and supporting the rule of law and the administration of justice. The SRA does this by overseeing all education and training requirements necessary to practise as a solicitor, licensing individuals and firms to practise, setting the standards of the profession and regulating and enforcing compliance against these standards.

We are in the process of undertaking a significant review of our own regulatory framework, and have set out the first phase of that review in our current consultation [Looking to the Future](https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/code-conduct-consultation/) [<https://upgrade.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/code-conduct-consultation/>]. For the first time we are consulting on separate Codes of Conduct. The Code of Conduct for Solicitors aims to set out clearly the professional standards and behaviours expected of solicitors in practice. The SRA Code of Conduct for Firms aims to provide more clarity to firms that we regulate about the business systems and controls that they need to have in place and what their responsibilities are as a SRA regulated business.

Our overarching aim is to make sure that we have a system of regulation that delivers against a set of core professional principles and clear standards, and which enables good, committed, lawyers and their firms to meet the diverse legal needs increasing number of consumers and the public. Professional standards, and effective enforcement against those standards, are fundamental to public protection. Those standards have to be set by the regulator and must reflect the expectations of the public.

With that in mind, we are interested in work that other regulators are doing to ensure that their regulation is clear and transparent, that standards meet public expectations and are understood and met by their regulated community.

The nine standards for pharmacy professionals

We would agree that the nine standards set out in the consultation are clear and easy to understand. Without a detailed knowledge of the standards of conduct, ethics and performance that the proposed standards replace, we are not able to comment whether there are any standards missing or any standards that should not be there. We can comment, more generally, that they cover the same kinds of ethics and behaviours that we are currently consulting on in our draft Codes. Public expectations of professionals focus on very similar areas regardless of whether the individual is, for example, a teacher, doctor, pharmacist or solicitor. Our consultation includes standards for solicitors and firms on treating clients fairly, maintaining trust, ensuring confidentiality, managing conflicts of interest, co-operating with the regulatory framework, and taking responsibility for their own (and employees) ongoing competence and effectiveness.

The standards you set out broadly align to the revised high level principles for solicitors that we propose to introduce.

In common with the approach that you propose for pharmacy professionals, we also intend that the SRA Principles will be applicable to solicitors at all times, both inside and outside of work. Meeting these high level ethical principles goes to the heart of what it means to be a solicitor, public protection and our core regulatory purpose.

We strongly agree with your view, set out in Part 1 of the consultation document, that standards should not set out in prescriptive detail how professionals should act in every situation. We are actively moving away from that approach with our current review of the SRA Handbook, which currently tries to do just that. For example, our current Code of Conduct is around 30 pages long, confusing and complicated, and makes the line between individual and entity responsibilities blurred and difficult to apply. We also need to make continual changes to the wider current Handbook which extends to over 400 pages to reflect the rapidly changing realities of the legal services market and consumer behaviour within that market. We plan to reduce this to some 50 pages, with new draft Codes of less than 10 pages long.

Supporting pharmacy practice

We strongly agree that clear, transparent, and user friendly guidance and supporting material are a key component to delivering a robust regulatory framework with which firms and individuals can comply. In common with the General Pharmaceutical Council, we are also undertaking a comprehensive review of our existing guidance and developing a new range of materials to support our proposed new regulatory arrangements.

We want to help firms and individuals to comply, and the key to doing that is developing comprehensive and usable toolkits. We are looking to

produce a range of toolkits for different sectors of the market, and have also offered to work with stakeholders who are looking to develop their own bespoke guidance materials.

As part of our current consultation, we are working with a range of stakeholders to develop a suite of case studies to support stakeholders, focusing on the 'grey areas' where we think that this kind of resource will be most useful to those we regulate. We are also developing other material e.g. webinars, blogs, videos, alongside more traditional guidance to support the go live phase of our new regulatory arrangements.