

Memorandum of Understanding between His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)

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Date: November 2025

Introduction

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) outlines the basis of cooperation between His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). It is intended to provide a framework to assist the joint working of the two organisations in order to support each organisation's role and functions and the aims and objective of this MoU.

This MoU is a statement of principle; more detailed operational protocols and guidance will be developed, as and when these are required.

Although HMIP and the GPhC agree to adhere to the contents of this MoU, it is not intended to be a legally binding document. It does not override the organisations' statutory responsibilities or functions, nor infringe the autonomy and accountability of HMIP and the GPhC.

Aims and objectives

The overarching aims of this MoU are to:

- maintain the safe practice of pharmacy and confidence in pharmacy services and pharmacy professionals
- contribute to an anticipatory and proportionate approach to regulation

Its specific objectives are to:

- support the effective sharing of expertise and experience
- support the sharing of information and intelligence as necessary to support each organisation's functions and the aims of this MoU
- ensure that effective channels of communication and information sharing are established and maintained
- define the circumstances in which the two organisations will act jointly and independently
- facilitate working together more effectively
- be transparent about areas of co-operation

Functions of the GPhC and HMIP

GPhC

The GPhC is the independent regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales. Its role is to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public who use pharmacy services in England, Scotland and Wales by upholding standards and public trust in pharmacy. The functions of the GPhC are set out in the Pharmacy Order 2010 and include:

- [setting standards for the education and training](#) of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff, and approving and accrediting their qualifications and training

- [maintaining a register](#) of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies
- [setting the standards that pharmacy professionals have to meet](#) throughout their careers
- [investigating concerns that pharmacy professionals are not meeting our standards](#), and taking action to restrict their ability to practise when this is necessary to protect patients and the public or to uphold public confidence in pharmacy
- [setting standards for registered pharmacies](#) which require them to provide a safe and effective service to patients
- [inspecting registered pharmacies](#) to check if they are meeting our standards.

In addition, the GPhC has enforcement powers and duties under the Poisons Act 1972, the Medicines Act 1968, the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 and the Veterinary Medicines Regulations. These enforcement duties/powers mainly relate to the sale and supply of medicines from registered pharmacies.

HMIP

HMI Prisons is an independent inspectorate whose Chief Inspector is a Crown appointment. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons' responsibilities are set out in sections 5A and 43 of the Prison Act 1952 (as amended). They are to inspect (or arrange for the inspection of) and report to the Secretary of State on:

- prisons, young offender institutions (YOIs), and secure training centres (STCs) in England and Wales;
- court custody facilities in England and Wales and escorts to and from these facilities; and
- immigration removal centres (IRCs), short-term holding facilities, pre-departure accommodation and escort arrangements throughout the UK.

In particular, the Chief Inspector shall report to the Secretary of State on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in establishments. The majority of inspections undertaken by the Chief Inspector benefit from the assistance of other inspectorates and inspections of STCs are undertaken jointly with Ofsted and the CQC. The Chief Inspector may also carry out inspections of military custody and other jurisdictions by invitation. The Chief Inspector must prepare an annual report to be laid before parliament.

HMI Prisons' work is carried out in accordance with the UK's obligations as a party to the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires each state party to designate an independent National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), which monitors places of detention for the purpose of preventing torture and ill-treatment. HMI Prisons is a member of the UK NPM.

Principles of co-operation

HMIP and the GPhC intend that their working relationship will be characterised by:

- making decisions that promote patient and public safety
- sharing information and intelligence responsibly
- subject to reasonable confidentiality restrictions, advising each other of matters of concern

- working together openly, transparently and constructively
- respecting each other's independent status
- using resources effectively and efficiently

Areas of co-operation

Planning Visits and Logistics

All arrangements for the inspection of relevant places of detention will be managed by HMIP for joint inspections. This includes aspects such as security clearance, key training (if applicable) and access and passes to the prisons. GPhC will liaise with HMIP on the appointment of inspectors who will specialise in relevant inspections of the prison pharmacies. HMIP may invite GPhC to inspect custodial contexts within its responsibility at the discretion of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Visits to prisons and Immigration Removal Centres will consist of a mixture of announced or unannounced inspections. In the case of announced visits timetables for the year will be drawn up by HMIP and circulated to the GPhC six months in advance. Details of the nominated GPhC Inspector attending the inspection will be provided to HMIP at least three months in advance of an announced visit, except in exceptional circumstances, for example sickness or unplanned leave.

The Lead GPhC coordinator will receive the master list of inspections and manage the information as classified and confidential. Details of the sites will be restricted to the staff allocated who will also treat the information as restricted and confidential. GPhC Inspectors will visit the relevant prisons during the week of the announced or unannounced inspection. They will liaise with Healthcare Inspectors to arrange the visit and also on the day of the visit pre/post inspection to flag up particular issues. Any breaches or loss of information will be reported to HMIP immediately.

Information Gathering

Inspections

The GPhC will (subject to fees having been agreed on an annual basis between the two parties) provide assistance with the pharmaceutical aspects of prison inspections, (including inspection of the management and use of controlled drugs), as required. The current scale of fees payable to the GPhC for these purposes is detailed in the Schedule of Fees and will be reviewed regularly. HMIP will provide details of inspection criteria (Expectations) against which performance is assessed. These will be used during visits and GPhC will be consulted and offered the opportunity to contribute to the regular review of these criteria.

Any problems identified during the course of a visit will be reported and managed in accordance with the usual chain of command (see below). This will usually require reporting to the HMIP Healthcare Inspector who will be responsible for liaising with the HMIP Inspection Team Leader. Reporting through usual chains of command do not, however, derogate from the GPhC's duties as a regulatory body for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and duties of enforcement under the Medicines Act 1968, the Poisons Act 1972, the Pharmacy Order 2010 and other relevant legislation.

Where the place of inspection has a registered pharmacy within it, the GPhC inspector will use the information gained about the pharmacy to perform an inspection of the premises under the "Standards for Registered Pharmacies", as they do for all registered premises.

Reports

Following an inspection visit, a report will be prepared by the GPhC Inspectorate on the pharmaceutical aspects of the visit that they have observed.

The GPhC's inspectors will provide a copy of a report of their inspection visit in the standard format (as advised by HMIP) within the agreed time period so that the full prisons inspection report can be finalised. Where practicable, this will usually be by the end of the week of the visit.

A separate report will be written for the GPhC registered premises inspection and will be shared with the superintendent pharmacist of the pharmacy in the usual way, which may include publishing this report.

Sharing information

Both organisations hold and use information about organisations and individuals to perform their core functions. The GPhC and HMIP will share information where it is necessary in order to perform these functions effectively and where it is in the public interest.

The organisations recognise that this exchange of information needs to be carried out responsibly and within the guidelines set out in this MoU.

It is understood by both organisations that statutory and other constraints on the exchange of information will be fully respected, including the requirements of data protection legislation (including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU 2016/679) as applied in the UK, the UK GDPR), the Human Rights Act 1998 and the common law duty of confidentiality.

Ad hoc requests for information should be sent to the contacts specified in **Appendix A**. Requests will be responded to in line with the receiving organisation's operational procedures and data protection legislation, as appropriate.

Both organisations are committed to the principle of using information more effectively to reduce the burden of administration and regulation. Where it supports the effective delivery of their respective roles and responsibilities, and the aims of this MoU, both organisations will explore systematically and routinely sharing specific data sets to the extent possible by law. To this extent, there is a data sharing agreement between the parties to detail the information sharing arrangements.

Where information shared under this MoU falls within the scope of a request for information under either the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or data protection legislation, the organisation receiving the request will consult the other party before any disclosure is made. This is so that they are aware of the potential impact of any disclosure on the work of the other party. Both organisations recognise that the final decision on disclosure will rest with the organisation that receives the request.

Data protection

Both organisations recognise their respective responsibilities as data controllers under data protection legislation (including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679) as applied in the UK (UK GDPR). Both will comply with any data sharing code published by the Information Commissioner under that legislation.

The following principles will apply to the sharing of personal information:

- There must be a fair and lawful basis for sharing information.
- Information must only be used for the purpose stated at the time it is shared.
- Information to be shared will be limited to what is necessary for the purpose and will be anonymised or pseudonymised where appropriate.
- Shared information that is not in the public domain must be treated as confidential and must not be shared with other parties without the written agreement of the organisation that provided the information.
- Information must be transmitted securely, for example by secure email or other agreed method.
- Information must be stored and processed securely and in a manner that reflects its sensitivity for example, where shared information includes special category and/or criminal information.
- Shared information must not be stored or shared outside the UK or European Economic Area without prior written agreement and appropriate assurances in place.
- The organisation receiving personal data will apply a reasonable retention period in line with its retention policy based on the purpose for which it was shared.
- Each organisation will act as an independent data controller and take appropriate steps to protect the confidential nature of documents and information that the other may provide.

Duration and review

This MoU is not time-limited and will continue to have effect until the principles described need to be altered or cease to be relevant. Both organisations will monitor its impact and effectiveness on an ongoing basis and it will be formally reviewed every two years. The MoU may be reviewed more urgently at any time at the request of either party and updated as required on agreement by both parties.

Both organisations have identified a person responsible for the management of this MoU in **Appendix A**. They will liaise as required to ensure this MoU is kept up to date, identify any emerging issues and resolve any questions that arise in the working relationship between the two organisations.

Signed for and on behalf of		Signed for and on behalf of	
General Pharmaceutical Council		HM Inspectorate of Prisons	
Level 14, One Cabot Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 4QJ		3rd Floor, 10 South Colonnade, Canary Wharf London, E14 4PU	
			
Name	Chris Askew	Name	Charlie Taylor
Title	Interim Chief Executive and Registrar	Title	Chief Inspector
Date	19 November 2025	Date	26 November 2025

Appendix A – MoU contacts

General Pharmaceutical Council

Name	Role	Contact details
MoU management:		
Roz Gittins	Chief Pharmacy Officer and Deputy Registrar	Roz.Gittins@pharmacyregulation.org
Chris Askew	Interim Chief Executive and Registrar	Chris.Askew@pharmacyregulation.org
Other contacts:		
Kieron Jones	Head of Pharmacies Regulation	Kieron.Jones@pharmacyregulation.org
Christopher Barnes	Inspector	Christopher.Barnes@pharmacyregulation.org
Ambrose Paschalides	Inspection Operations Manager	Ambrose.Paschalides@pharmacyregulation.org
Hannah Fellows	Head of Professional Regulation-Legal and Enforcement	Hannah.Fellows@pharmacyregulation.org
Robin Johnson	Governance and Assurance Manager/Data Protection Officer	Robin.Johnson@pharmacyregulation.org

HMIP

Name	Role	Contact details
MoU management:		
Elizabeth Barker	Head of Secretariat	Elizabeth.barker@hmiprisons.gov.uk
Tania Osborne	Head of Health & Social Care Inspection	Tania.osborne@hmiprisons.gov.uk
Other contacts:		

Name	Role	Contact details
Sophie Riley	Head of Research, Data and Thematics and HMIP SIRO	<u>Sophie.riley@hmiprisons.gov.uk</u>
Martin Lomas	Deputy Chief Inspector	<u>Martin.lomas@hmiprisons.gov.uk</u>