

3 March 2020

How we will continue to regulate in light of novel coronavirus (Covid-19)

We understand that as health and care professionals you may be feeling anxious about Novel coronavirus (Covid-19). Across the UK, public health organisations, government health officials and employers are putting in place plans to ensure that people receive the right advice, care and support and that you have the best information, environment and equipment to do your job.

Health and care professionals will play a vital role in helping to treat and contain coronavirus and we recognise that should the virus spread further, health and care professionals are likely to face an increased burden in helping the UK through the outbreak. It's important that during this time everyone follows national public health advice and guidance.

We also recognise that health and care professionals may have understandable concerns about decisions they may need to take in order to provide the best care in challenging circumstances. Together, as professional regulators across the UK, we have prepared a joint statement on how we will carry out our roles during this time.

Joint statement from Chief Executives of statutory regulators of health and care professionals

We hold the registers of health and care professionals in the UK. We support those professionals to deliver better, safer care by setting the standards they need to meet, to act in the best interests of patients and people who use health and social care services at all times.

As registered professionals, the first concern of the individuals on our registers will be the care of their patients and people who use health and social care services. We encourage health and care professionals, working in partnership with each other and people using services, to use their professional judgement to assess risk to deliver safe care informed by any relevant guidance and the values and principles set out in their professional standards.

We recognise that in highly challenging circumstances, professionals may need to depart from established procedures in order to care for patients and people using health and social care services. Our regulatory standards are designed to be flexible and to provide a framework for decision-making in a wide range of situations. They support professionals by highlighting the key principles which should be followed, including the need to work cooperatively with colleagues to keep people safe, to practise in line with the best available evidence, to recognise and work within the limits of their competence, and to have appropriate indemnity arrangements relevant to their practice.

We recognise that the individuals on our registers may feel anxious about how context is taken into account when concerns are raised about their decisions and actions in very challenging circumstances. Where a concern is raised about a registered professional, it

will always be considered on the specific facts of the case, taking into account the factors relevant to the environment in which the professional is working. We would also take account of any relevant information about resource, guidelines or protocols in place at the time.

We may issue profession specific guidance to registrants to provide additional support where that is needed.

The statutory health and care regulators that have agreed to this statement are:

General Chiropractic Council
General Dental Council
General Medical Council
General Optical Council
General Osteopathic Council
General Pharmaceutical Council
Health and Care Professions Council
Nursing and Midwifery Council
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland
Scottish Social Services Council
Social Work England