

UK Public Health Register

Fitness to Practise: Triage guidance

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Triage process

1. When UKPHR is informed of a concern, it must first go through an initial assessment process to determine whether the concern can be taken further for investigation. This process is known as triage.
2. At the triage stage, UKPHR determines **whether the concern is clearly communicated, relevant, and suggests impairment** of a UKPHR registrant. If the concern meets the criteria outlined below, it will be more fully investigated.

Triage threshold

3. A decision to progress a concern to an investigation stage will be based upon clear and apparent evidence that the concern meets the threshold criteria. The final decision as to whether the threshold is met will be made by the UKPHR Registrar.
4. The threshold criteria is based upon four key tests:
 - a. **Is the concern made in writing?** This can be by letter or email so that UKPHR can be clear on exactly what the concern is so that the issues are well understood by all relevant parties (ie UKPHR, the complainant, and the registrant). If a concern cannot be made directly to UKPHR in writing due to access issues, UKPHR will work with the complainant to ensure the details of the complaint are clearly set out.
 - b. **Is the concern about a UKPHR registrant?** UKPHR must confirm that the individual is a registrant. Concerns about those who are not registered with UKPHR will not be considered further. If a concern is raised about someone who is not registered at the time and they later apply to restore their registration, the concern will be considered as part of that application.
 - c. **Is the concern relevant to the UKPHR registrant's ability to meet Good Public Health Practice (2024)?** For example:
 - Alleged misconduct or unethical behaviour
 - Deficient professional performance or competence
 - Health concerns affecting ability to practise safely
 - Criminal cautions or convictions
 - Improper inclusion on another professional register
 - d. **Does the evidence provided, if verified and substantiated, suggest that fitness to practise is impaired?** The concern must be related to an **individual's fitness to practise** and demonstrate that conduct falls below the standards of Good Public Health Practice 2024.
5. In fitness to practise, "impaired" means a healthcare professional's ability to work safely and effectively is negatively affected, damaged, or weakened, posing a risk to the public, and it can stem from misconduct, poor performance, health issues, or character concerns, requiring restrictions or removal from practice to protect patients or the public. It's a judgment that their professional ability is compromised, making

them unfit to practice without limitations or at all, and involves assessing current risk to public safety and confidence in the profession. The causes of impairment include:

- **Misconduct:** Serious professional misconduct, including issues in private life that affect trustworthiness, like criminal convictions or discriminatory behaviour.
 - **Competence:** Deficient professional performance or lack of necessary skills, knowledge or English language proficiency.
 - **Health:** Adverse physical or mental health conditions that prevent safe practice.
 - **Character/Conduct:** Issues with a registrant's character or conduct that undermine public confidence, even if not directly clinical.
6. This test is **not** a determination of guilt or confirmation of proof. The threshold is purposefully low; the question is whether there is *enough credible information* that, if true, could amount to a breach of UKPHR's standards of conduct or competence.
 7. Vexatious, trivial, or clearly unfounded complaints are screened out at this stage.
 8. If the answer to at least one of the questions is **no**, the case will be closed with no further action taken by UKPHR. Reasons will be provided to the person who raised the concern. This is also the case if a concern is clearly vexatious or has no relevance to fitness to practise.
 9. If the answer to all four questions is **yes**, the matter proceeds to the **investigation and evidence gathering stage**. The person who raised the concern will receive a communication from us confirming that the concern has been considered and will be investigated further. At this point, we will also inform the registrant that a concern has been raised about them.
 10. If at the triage stage we require clarification about the concern in order to make a decision, we may need to contact other parties such as the registrant's employer. We will notify the registrant at this point if any other party is engaged at the triage stage.
 11. If a significant safety issue is identified through the triage process, we may need to share information with other organisations who are empowered to address the concerns before coming to a final decision as to whether the concern will pass out of triage or be closed.