

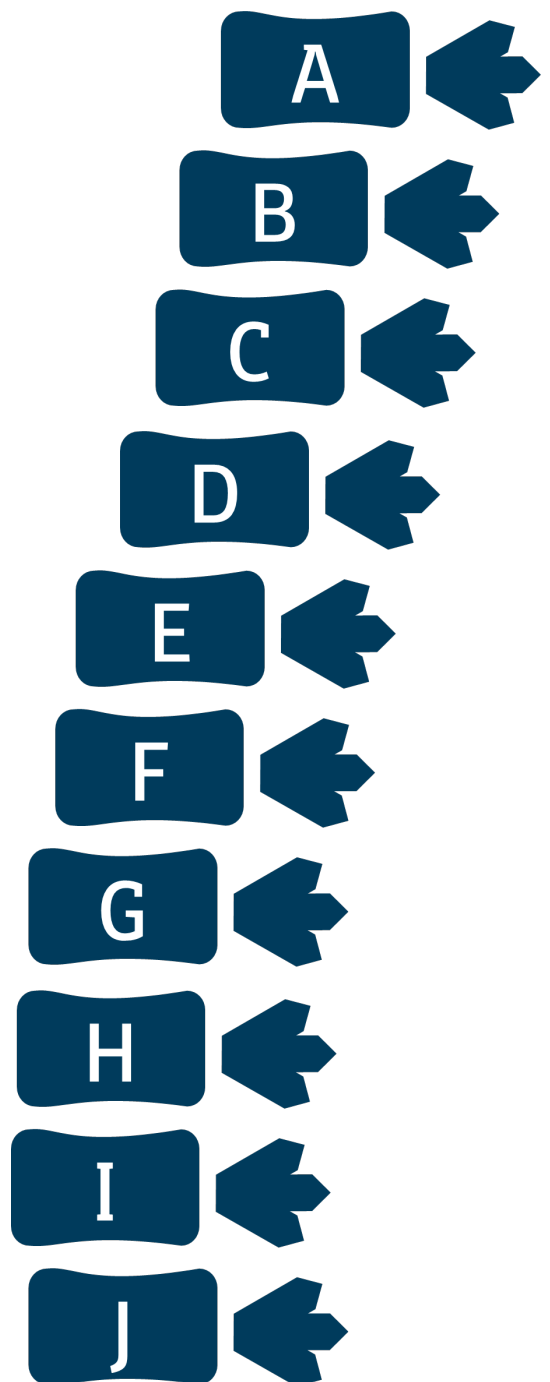
The Code of Professional Practice

Proposal Published for Consultation by
the General Chiropractic Council

July 2024



**General
Chiropractic
Council**



Introduction

About the General Chiropractic Council

The General Chiropractic Council is the UK regulator for the chiropractic profession and has the statutory responsibility for setting the standards of professional practice (the standards of conduct, performance and ethics; and the standards of proficiency) that all chiropractors must follow.

Chiropractors are professionals, regulated by the General Chiropractic Council, and the Code defines what is required of them across the full range of different settings where they work and the range of roles that they have.

The purpose of The Code of Professional Practice

The Values, Principles and standards within the Code form the basic expectation that everyone – public, patients, other health care providers and other chiropractors - can have of a registered chiropractor. A chiropractor can go above and beyond these standards in their practice, but they must at least meet them.

The Code is addressed to chiropractors but will assist anyone who wishes to understand the duties and responsibilities of members of this profession. They are not listed in order of priority and relate to both behaviour and professional performance.

For chiropractors:

The Code of Professional Practice is a framework to help you provide safe, high-quality care in the best interests of patients. It promotes conduct and care that meet the reasonable expectations of patients.

As a healthcare professional you have a responsibility to ensure the care and safety of patients and the public; and uphold professional standards in all aspects of your professional and personal life. You are professionally accountable and personally responsible for your practice, what is done or not done, no matter the direction or guidance given by an employer or colleague. You must be able to justify your decisions and actions. If someone raises a concern about your fitness to practise, you will need to demonstrate that your decision making was informed by these standards and that you acted in the best interests of the patient. You must also comply with all legal requirements that apply to you as a healthcare professional – including (but not limited to) health and safety, data protection, equality and consumer protection.

For patients and the public:

The Code of Professional Practice sets out what a patient can expect of a chiropractor. It puts the patient at the centre of their care, recognising them as an individual with diverse needs. The Code supports safe, high-quality care for all. It aims to ensure that patients are treated fairly, with respect and dignity, and that their best interests are the priority throughout the care process.

The structure of The Code of Professional Practice

The Code of Professional Practice follows a values-based approach by:

1. Identifying an agreed core set of shared Values (between patients and chiropractors). These underpin the Code.
2. Translating the core Values into high level Principles. These describe actions necessary to implement and realise the Values.
3. Setting out standards, articulated as goals or outcomes, that are necessary to achieve each of the Principles.

The Values

Patients and chiropractors identified four Values as being important:

- Patient-centred care
- Honesty, Integrity and Transparency
- Safety and Quality
- Professionalism

As the Code is built around these shared Values, it reflects the expectations that patients will expect of you as a chiropractor, and what you will provide as a member of the profession.

The Principles

The Values are realised through ten high level Principles that you must uphold.

While the table suggests the Values predominantly reflected within each Principle, the other Values will also be relevant to each Principle, depending on circumstances

| Principle | | Reflecting the values of: |
|-----------|---|--|
| A | Put the interests of patients first | Patient-centred care; Safety and Quality; |
| B | Ensure safety and quality in clinical practice | Safety and Quality; |
| C | Act with honesty and integrity and maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct | Honesty, Integrity and Transparency; Professionalism; |
| D | Provide a good standard of clinical care and professional practice | Patient-centred care; Safety and Quality; |
| E | Establish and maintain clear professional boundaries | Safety and Quality; Professionalism; |
| F | Obtain appropriate, informed consent from patients | Honesty, Integrity and Transparency; Patient-centred care; Safety and Quality; Professionalism; |
| G | Communicate professionally, properly and effectively | Honesty, Integrity and Transparency; Safety and Quality; Patient-centred care; Professionalism; |
| H | Foster collaborative healthcare, effective professional relationships and safe, supportive workplace practice | Safety and Quality; Patient- centred care, Professionalism; |
| I | Maintain, develop and work within your professional knowledge and skills | Safety and quality; Professionalism; |
| J | Maintain and protect patient information | Safety and quality; Professionalism; |

The Standards

You must meet all standards to uphold each Principle. However, in contrast to inflexible rules, standards permit more than one means of meeting the requirement, and so represent a goals-based approach in defining practice.

As an autonomous healthcare professional, you will use your professional judgement in applying the standards, applying your knowledge, skills and experience and referencing the standards and other sources of guidance. In doing so you will practise ethically and in the interests of patients.

The words “You must” are implied at the start of every standard to indicate that every standard is mandatory. The word “should” is used occasionally to imply that a particular sentence is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory.

Supplementary guidance

In relation to some standards or Principles we may produce supplementary material where we feel that registrants may need additional support. This is guidance. Each guidance document provides detailed explanations as well as defining what the GCC expects of you.

Each year (as part of the process to retain your registration) you will be asked to confirm that you are keeping up to date with and following all of the GCCs supplementary guidance.

We would also draw your attention to the extensive glossary guidance which will help you understand your responsibilities and duties as set out within the Code.

How The Code of Professional Practice and guidance informs Fitness to Practise investigations

Most chiropractors uphold high professional standards, but a small proportion fall short. If we receive a complaint that a chiropractor has not met one or more of the requirements of the Code, we are bound by legislation to investigate and take action where needed.

In any fitness to practise procedure, the Values, Principles, standards and supplementary guidance (including the glossary) will all be considered to determine whether there has been a breach of professional standards. However, an unintentional or minor breach of a standard does not always mean there will be a sanction against you.

The Code of Professional Practice:

Principle A

Put the interests of patients first

The care and **safety** of every patient is the priority. The chiropractor's duty of care towards them is fulfilled by promoting their **safety** and wellbeing, treating them fairly and with respect and acting to safeguard them. Providing **patient-centred care** enables their interests to be met. Chiropractors listen to each patient, help them to be involved in reaching decisions about their care, provide care that is personalised to their needs and empower them in their care, health and wellbeing.

- A1** Put the patient's needs and safety at the centre of their care.
- A2** Show respect, compassion, and care for the patient: ask what matters to them and consider their needs and preferences; respond honestly and openly to their questions. Do not put any pressure on a patient to accept your advice.
- A3** Engage effectively with the patient through person-centred conversations and interactions.
- A4** Support the patient with their care, health and wellbeing. Involve them in decisions about their care.
- A5** Collaborate with the patient's family, advocates, carers, and health and care professionals to support the patient - particularly when they have complex health or social circumstances.
- A6** Respect the patient's privacy, dignity and their right to choose who is in the room when their care is provided.
- A7** Treat the patient fairly and without discrimination. Interact with them in a way that respects their individual choices, diversity and culture.
- A8** Safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:
 - considering their safety and welfare,
 - assessing their vulnerability,
 - actively looking for signs of abuse.

When you suspect a child or vulnerable adult could be at risk of, or suffering, abuse or neglect, promptly follow the established local safeguarding arrangements to report your concern; and record your suspicions and actions.

Principle B

Ensure safety and quality in clinical practice

Robust systems of safety in practice help keep patients safe. These should promote **safety**, in the interest of preventing harm, before harm occurs. Prevention requires **transparent** reporting of safety incidents by chiropractors, enabling learning to occur and action to be taken to reduce future risks to patients. Chiropractors must be prepared to respond to emergencies in practice. Chiropractors have a duty to act where they have concerns for the **safety** of any patient.

The accessibility of healthcare matters to patients, and the barriers patients face to accessing healthcare can extend beyond physical and societal barriers.

Chiropractors need to understand and recognise barriers to accessing healthcare and take reasonable measures to address these in practice.

Assuring the **quality of care** provided is central to the protection of patients. This requires chiropractors to implement robust methods for continuous improvement in the quality of care they provide to patients.

- B1** Promote and maintain a culture of safety, to try to prevent harm before it occurs.
- B2** When you have concerns about the safety of a patient, act promptly and appropriately, and record what you did.
- B3** Practise in a safe, hygienic environment where you actively identify and control risks. Ensure all equipment you use is safe and meets relevant regulatory standards. Plan for emergencies and follow those plans when an emergency happens.
- B4** Recognise the importance of promoting accessible healthcare for all patients, and support this in your practice.
- B5** Recognise safety incidents and "near misses" that threaten the safety of a patient or another person. When you identify an incident or near miss, report it through a suitable safety system, so that you, and the wider profession, can learn from it.
- B6** Collect appropriate feedback, quality and other indicators to evaluate the quality of care of your patients. Apply quality management principles to continuously improve: your practice, your wider team practice, and service delivery.

Principle C

Act with honesty, and integrity, and maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct

Patients must be able to trust chiropractors. A chiropractor justifies the trust of patients and the public, both in themselves and in the profession, by upholding high standards of conduct at all times. Trust is earned by acting **transparently** and by demonstrating **honesty, integrity** and candour.

Professionalism also includes managing one's own health and wellbeing, and the expression of personal views, with respect to interactions with patients and others. It also includes wider responsibilities as a regulated healthcare professional, including the duty to take action when you witness unprofessional behaviour by others.

- C1** Look after your health and wellbeing, seeking support when necessary. Protect others from harm caused by the health, conduct or performance of you or any other regulated healthcare professional.
- C2** Ensure that you, and anyone that has a chiropractic qualification and works with you, is registered with a statutory UK health regulator and has appropriate insurance and indemnity cover for their full scope of practice.
Be clear with the patient that you are registered with the General Chiropractic Council.
- C3** Take responsibility, as an autonomous healthcare professional, for keeping up to date with, and following: legislation; GCC guidance; regulations; and relevant codes of practice from other regulators.
- C4** When telling people about your services, ensure that all information is factual, verifiable, not misleading, and does not exploit their vulnerability, or lack of health knowledge.
- C5** Ensure the credibility of any health information that you share, demonstrating transparency, and accountability: information must be evidence-based, and accessible to its intended audience.
- C6** Behave with integrity, act professionally, and honestly, upholding the reputation of the profession and justifying public trust, in all aspects of your life.
- C7** Maintain patient confidentiality, and dignity, at all times including online, during remote consultations, and when referring to patients anonymously.
- C8** Be honest, fair, and transparent in your business. Your recommendations and care for a patient must not be detrimentally affected by any personal, financial or commercial interest. Do not ask for, accept, or offer, any inducement that may detrimentally affect the care of a patient.

- C9** Determine and share a clinical plan of care for the patient separately (and independently) from any financial payment plan.
- Provide a clear contract for any financial payment plan which must include arrangements for refunds for unused care. Do not offer a financial payment plan at the initial stage that extends beyond the amount of care set out in your initial clinical plan of care for the patient. Do not pressure the patient to commit financially to care.
- C10** Fulfil the duty of candour by being open and honest with the patient. Inform them if something goes wrong with their care which causes, or could cause, harm or distress. Offer an apology, a suitable remedy or support, and an explanation of resulting actions.
- C11** Ensure your personal biases, values and beliefs do not detrimentally impact the care that you provide to the patient, your personal interactions, or your reputation.
- C12** Raise concerns about colleagues if you believe they are treating people unfairly, have discriminated against someone or if their personal biases have detrimentally impacted the care they provide. Raise concerns following the relevant procedures and maintaining the safety of everyone involved.
- C13** Justify and record your reasons for refusing or discontinuing care for a patient. Explain, in a fair and unbiased way, how they can find other healthcare professionals who could offer care. Do not unreasonably deny a patient access to care that meets their needs.
- C14** If you have concerns about your own fitness to practise, whether due to issues with health, character, behaviour, judgement or any other matter which may compromise patient safety or damage the reputation of your profession, stop practising immediately and seek appropriate advice.
- C15** Promptly inform the GCC if, anywhere in the world:
- i. you are charged with a criminal offence
 - ii. you are convicted of a criminal offence
 - iii. you are the subject of a regulatory investigation
 - iv. you are suspended, dismissed, refused membership or placed under a practice restriction following concerns about your professional conduct or competence by another organisation (including regulator, insurer, professional body, employer).
- C16** Cooperate promptly and fully with any formal investigation, inquiry, or complaints procedure into your own professional conduct or performance, that of others or the care of a patient. Respond to all reasonable requests from the GCC.
- If you are informed that you are the subject of a GCC investigation, follow any directions you are given by the GCC to assist in a fair and efficient process.

Principle D

Provide a good standard of clinical care and professional practice

A chiropractor provides good **quality care** that is **patient-centred, safe** and effective, and that is consistent with the current standards for good healthcare practice. This is supported by the use of critical thinking underpinning clinical approaches and that evidence of the best available quality is integrated throughout the care of patients. Packages of care that adhere to the recommendations of relevant clinical guidelines, within the scope of chiropractic practice, should be offered. A chiropractor must have sound justification for their clinical recommendations and decisions about care.

Developments in professional practice include new technologies and ways of working, that bring benefits to patient care but might involve some risk. Chiropractors must engage with these to promote safety and effectiveness.

Chiropractors are well-placed through their interactions with patients, and are expected, as health and care professionals, to engage in interventions that support prevention and health promotion to the benefit of individuals and the population.

Clinical assessment and diagnosis or rationale for care

- D1** Take and record a thorough case history for the patient.
- D2** Determine the patient's goals of care. Before commencing care, agree (and record) with the patient how you will use evidence-based outcome measures to review their progress towards the planned health outcomes.
- D3** Carry out a physical examination of the patient using methods supported by the best available evidence. You must fully explain to the patient (and record) the results of the examination.
- D4** Ensure that you have the informed consent of the patient for any diagnostic investigation (including imaging) before it is carried out. Carry out investigation in the best interests of the patient and in a way that minimises the risks to them. Base the investigation on clinical reasoning, following evidence-based guidelines and adhering to all regulatory standards.
- D5** Use the results of your clinical assessment of the patient to arrive at a working diagnosis or rationale for care which you must record and keep under review. You must keep the patient fully informed, including about any diagnostic uncertainty.

Developing a plan of care

D6

In partnership with the patient use:

- the findings of the clinical assessment
- the best available evidence,
- the patient's needs and priorities

to propose (and record) a personal plan of care for the patient. You must tell the patient where your proposals are not supported by evidence of accepted quality and record your rationale and discussions.

D7

Inform the patient of the risks, benefits and alternatives to the proposed plan of care, including evidence-based options provided by other healthcare professionals, and the expected natural history (prognosis without any care).

D8

Record and explain to the patient how progress towards the planned health outcomes of the care will be evaluated, and set timescales.

You must obtain the informed consent of the patient before implementing the plan of care. Do not propose a plan of care that is not justified by a robust, recorded, clinical assessment and reassessment.

Evaluating and modifying the plan of care

D9

Continuously monitor (and record) the patient's progress, evaluating and adapting the plan of care to meet their needs. Carry out formal reviews at regular intervals, pre-agreed with the patient. Use evidence-based outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of care.

D10

The patient must provide informed consent to any continuation or modification to the plan of care following a discussion with you considering how they are progressing towards their planned health outcomes. Record that discussion.

Providing care

D11

Use evidence-based practice to select and implement safe, appropriate, chiropractic care that meets the needs and preferences of the patient; this may include:

- manual techniques,
- rehabilitative interventions,
- and psychologically informed approaches.

Encourage and support patients to self-manage their health, signposting them to relevant resources.

- D12** With the informed consent of the patient make, receive and implement effective referrals to other healthcare professionals, in the best interest of the patient.
- D13** Engage in evidence-based interventions that support prevention and health promotion to benefit patients and population health.
Support public health initiatives to enhance the health and wellbeing of others.
- D14** With the consent of the patient, use digital technologies to enhance practice. Ensure care is effective and safe whether it is provided face-to-face or remotely.
- D15** Engage with research ethically and effectively: this may include promoting or conducting research, and the use of research in practice.

Principle E

Establish and maintain clear professional boundaries

Healthcare professionals occupy a position of power and trust, with respect to patients. Patients are protected when their chiropractor ensures that their interactions are confined within the limits set by proper boundaries for the **professional** relationship. This enables care to be provided in effective partnership with the patient, upholding trust, respect and dignity, and always acting in the best interest of the patient.

- E1** Recognise the power imbalance between you as a healthcare professional and the patient. Do not abuse your position of power and trust in any interaction with the patient. Do not cross, pursue or encourage the crossing of sexual, emotional or financial boundaries.
- E2** Ensure you, and the staff you employ, treat the patient, their carer and anyone accompanying them, with equal respect and dignity.
- E3** If there is a clinical need for an item of clothing to be removed, explain the reason to the patient and obtain and record informed consent; offer them privacy to undress and the use of a gown.
If there is a clinical need for an item of clothing to be adjusted, obtain informed consent from the patient.
- E4** Consider the need for (or advisability of) another person to be present to act as a chaperone or advocate for the patient. You must, wherever possible, offer a chaperone if the clinical assessment or care might be considered intimate or where the patient is a child or a vulnerable adult, or where the patient requests one. Record when you offer or use a chaperone or advocate.

Principle F

Obtain appropriate, informed consent from patients

Patients have the right to determine what happens to them, and chiropractors have legal and ethical duties to obtain informed consent from the patient, or other valid authority, for clinical, and some non-clinical procedures.

- F1** Give the patient accurate, relevant and clear information in a format that is accessible to them so they can make informed decisions about their health needs and care options. Take reasonable steps to check that they understand the information given to them.
- F2** Give due regard to the patient's capacity to give informed consent, considering that their capacity can change over time.
- F3** Obtain, and record, informed consent from a patient (or their valid authority) before:
- commencing assessment or care,
 - involving them in teaching or research,
 - making a recording of them,
 - disclosing identifiable information about them (unless there is another legal basis to do so).

Consent is a continuous process, and you must make ongoing checks that consent continues to be given.

- F4** Ensure the consent of the patient is voluntarily given, without pressure, or undue influence.
- F5** Take additional care to obtain informed consent when seeing a child or vulnerable patient, considering if the patient is legally competent to give consent or requires the consent of a parent or valid authority.

Principle G

Communicate professionally, properly, and effectively

The **safety** of patients, the **quality** of their care and the provision of **patient-centred care** require chiropractors to communicate well with patients, colleagues, and other healthcare professionals. Duties relating to communication also extend to the wider sharing of information by the chiropractor, as a healthcare professional, through all forms of media.

G1 Take reasonable steps to understand and meet the language and communication needs and preferences of the patient, while maintaining their privacy.

G2 Communicate clinical information to the patient clearly, sensitively and effectively. Use language that enhances the care of the patient, promotes their health literacy, and supports shared decision-making.

G3 Have visible and easy to understand information for the patient on

- fees
- charging policies
- complaints

These policies must include the patient's right to change their mind (remove consent) about their care and their right to refer any unresolved complaints to the GCC. You must respond quickly to any complaints that arise.

If you practise in Wales, you should consider also making your policies available in the Welsh language.

G4 Communicate effectively with other professionals; in the interest of meeting the patient's health and care needs and goals; sharing information with the consent of the patient.

G5 Provide information to the patient about everyone who provides their care, distinguishing between colleagues who you have delegated care to, those who you have referred the patient to, and those (such as yourself) who are responsible for their regular care. Include arrangements for when you are unavailable.

G6 Use the internet (include media sharing, social networking sites and user generated content) responsibly, maintaining professional boundaries and checking that information is not misleading or in conflict with your duty to promote public health and maintain public confidence in the profession.

Principle H

Foster collaborative healthcare, effective professional relationships and safe, supportive workplace practice

It is essential that chiropractors work well with others, within the workplace, externally and inter-professionally, in the interest of keeping patients **safe** and ensuring the **quality** of their care. This includes maintaining respectful **professional** relationships and a positive workplace culture, as well as an active duty to act upon the poor behaviour of others. Chiropractors are also required to give **professional** support to others, where appropriate

- H1** Enhance the integrated care of the patient by collaborating effectively with other health and care professionals.
- H2** Delegate tasks or duties only if safe and appropriate to do so. Ensure that the person you delegate to is qualified, competent, supervised and supported.
- H3** Foster effective team working and professional interpersonal relationships. When required, support the design, delivery, evaluation, and enhancement of healthcare services, and the integration of patient care within these services.
Your professional responsibility towards colleagues
- H4** Demonstrate leadership in your role as an autonomous healthcare professional.
- H5** Treat others in the workplace fairly and with respect. Take action if you become aware of bullying, harassment, or intimidation of patients, colleagues or others; by following relevant procedures and keeping everyone involved safe.
- H6** When the performance or conduct of colleagues puts others at risk of harm; report, follow up and escalate concerns by following relevant procedures. Act quickly and appropriately when concerns are raised to you; and encourage and support colleagues to raise their concerns.
- H7** Be prepared to contribute to mentoring, teaching, training and professional development of students and other colleagues. Allow your workplace colleagues to meet their regulatory duties.

Principle I

Maintain, develop and work within your professional knowledge and skills

Chiropractic practice is a career-long journey that requires the ongoing development and maintenance of skills and knowledge to keep up to date with developments affecting **professional** practice. Chiropractors work within their scope of practice. They continuously monitor their need to adapt and update their practice, taking responsibility for remaining up to date, and for further developing and improving their **professional** performance.

- I1 Continuously enhance the care and safety of patients through reflective practice. Seek feedback and analyse information about your practice and the care you provide.
- I2 Regularly consider how to adapt or improve your practice considering new developments, technologies and evidence from research.
- I3 Routinely seek and critically appraise emerging evidence. Integrate findings of the best quality evidence into your practice, to enhance the care of patients.
- I4 Maintain and develop your competence and performance, taking part in relevant and regular learning and continuing professional development activities. Be competent in all aspects of your professional work, including in any formal leadership, management, research or teaching role.
- I5 Recognise and work within the limits of your own knowledge, skills and competence. Be clear with the patient about your limits.
- I6 Recognise the roles and expertise of other chiropractors and healthcare professionals. Refer to them, or seek their expertise, when needed.
- I7 Do not allow another person to take on responsibility for the clinical assessment or care of a patient where it is beyond their level of knowledge, skills, or experience.

Principle J

Maintain and protect information about patients

Patients have the right for their personal information to be protected. Chiropractors fulfil their duty to ensure the proper confidentiality of patient information by storing patient records responsibly, by keeping up to date with advancing technology and taking positive action to prevent improper disclosure of patient information.

- J1** Keep information about patients confidential and avoid improper disclosure of their personal information, through any medium. The responsibility for security is yours, and you cannot delegate accountability to third-party suppliers responsible for the day-to-day management of data.
Adapt to advancing technology, including data sharing, media sharing and social media, to proactively protect the patient's personal information.
- J2** Only disclose personal information without the consent of the patient in accordance with the law. Record the disclosure and the legal basis.
- J3** Keep patient records up to date, legible, and attributable. Your record must be representative of your interaction with each patient. Retrospective amendments or additions to patient records must be clearly identified.
- J4** Store patient records safely, and securely (whether physically or digitally) so that they remain in good condition for the retention period described in law (accounting for the age of the patient and when they were last seen).
- J5** Have arrangements in place to protect or transfer patient records in case of moving clinic, ceasing practice or in the event of your death.
- J6** Ensure that patient records remain your responsibility, even where a patient has moved, unless you have contractually transferred this responsibility to another healthcare professional or organisation.
- J7** Give patients access to their personal health records as required by law.

The Code of Professional Practice – Consultation Edition

This edition of The Code of Professional Practice has been produced for the purpose of the 2024 Consultation.

It is not the final document and will be subject to change following the conclusion of the consultation period.

Your Feedback is Vital – Act Now!
Share your insights on the Code of Professional Practice



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[This document is also available in Welsh.](#)

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