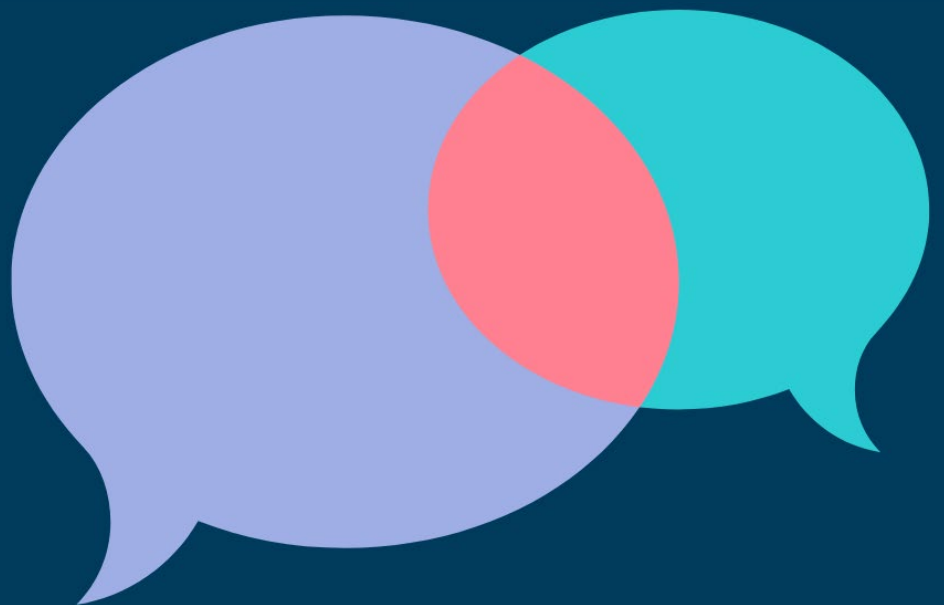


The Code of Professional Practice

GCC Consultation Document – July 2024



Overview

What we are doing

1. The General Chiropractic Council (GCC) is the regulator for chiropractors in the UK, Isle of Man and Gibraltar to ensure the safety of patients undergoing chiropractic treatment. We are an independent statutory body established by, and accountable to, Parliament to regulate the chiropractic profession.
2. We have four core functions:
 - Setting standards for chiropractic education and training, performance and conduct
 - Approving qualifications leading to registration
 - Maintaining a register of individuals that are fit to practice as chiropractors
 - Investigating and acting where registrants' fitness to practice may be impaired
3. This consultation seeks views on changes to [The Code: Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for chiropractors \(2016\)](#) commonly referred to as "the Code". The Code sets out the standards of conduct, performance and ethics and the standards of proficiency. It is integral to ensuring high quality professional practice and sets out for patients the quality of care they are entitled to receive from chiropractors. For chiropractors the standards are the benchmarks of professional conduct and practice.
4. The changes we are proposing are consolidated into a new document, called [The Code of Professional Practice](#).
5. This consultation will be open from 22 July 2024 to midnight on 27 September 2024.
6. For details of how to respond to the consultation, see [Section 5](#).

Why We Are Doing this now

7. We last consulted on the Code in 2015, with the Code coming into effect in 2016. Since then, the profession has evolved in response to changing patient expectations, and developments in wider healthcare. Reviews are essential so that we can ensure that the Code is relevant to current practice, continues to deliver effective public protection and confidence, and is understood by those who use it.
8. The purpose of the review is to
 - make any necessary updates to the current standards that reflect changes to practice or changing patient expectations;
 - ensure that the current standards are fit for purpose; and
 - ensure that the standards reflect the current context within which registrants practise.

What will happen next?

9. The public consultation will be open for 10 weeks.
10. Once the consultation has closed, we will analyse all the comments we have received and identify whether changes should be made in response. The analysis will reflect the range of different insights – including from those who feel they do not have a strong view. Each comment will be considered on its merits, and identical comments will only be considered once. Council will consider the analysis and changes and agree the final version.
11. We expect to publish the revised Code of Professional Practice in early 2025, alongside information on its implementation. As part of this process, there is a statutory requirement for the formal implementation of the Code to follow a year later allowing registrants and businesses to prepare.

Section 1: About the standards

12. As the regulator for chiropractors in the UK we have statutory responsibility for setting standards for chiropractors. Registrants need to use their professional judgement to decide how they will meet the standards. The introductory text provides further context to the standards; however, registrants must meet the standards.
13. The standards set by the GCC are to protect the public and to promote and maintain public confidence in the chiropractic profession, in line with our statutory objectives. The standards represent the minimum expectations of registrants below which action may be taken if the registrant does not meet those standards.
14. Registrants are professionally accountable and personally responsible for their practice and for what they do or do not do. Registrants must always be able to justify their decisions and actions.

Section 2: Reviewing our standards

15. In 2023, the GCC carried out [a scoping review of The Code](#) to evaluate whether it remained fit for purpose, was up to date, maintained best practice and reflected developments in the profession and wider healthcare sector. The purpose of the scoping review was to gather evidence to inform whether changes were required.
16. The views of multiple stakeholders (including patients, registrants, the four professional associations and the Royal College of Chiropractors) were considered. We compared the Code with those set by other healthcare regulators; and looked at information and data held by the GCC.
17. The report concluded there was scope to improve the link between the values and principles of the Code with the regulatory goals and outcomes.

18. It also identified gaps – with many of those previously identified in the [review of GCC Education Standards](#) in 2022. Significant areas for development included:

- Patient-centred care
- Acting in the best interests of the patient
- Safety and quality of care
- EDI considerations (including a greater duty to challenge and act)
- Position of power, trust and professional boundaries
- Prevention, health promotion and population health
- Collaborative health care, professional relationships and workplace practice
- Performance improvement and adaptive practice (including reflective practice and implementing evidence into practice)
- Communication, digital technologies, and social networking/media sharing

19. The report recommended clearly stating the core Values held by chiropractors and patients. It recommended retaining the current Principles but reframing them to emphasise those core Values. The Values were developed in consultation with the profession and noted by Council in March. In rank order of importance there are:

- i. Patient-centred care
- ii. Honesty, integrity and transparency
- iii. Safety and Quality
- iv. Professionalism

20. So that we could hear the views of stakeholders early in the development process, we held meetings with the professional associations and with registrants online and in person. We are grateful to those taking part.

21. To support those conversations, we also looked at research, fitness to practise cases and enquiries and responses to articles in the GCC monthly newsletter. We also reviewed information from our monthly Pulse survey of registrants, we spoke to Council members and the Education Committee and members of our fitness to practise panels.

22. Ahead of the registrant events we published [briefing sheets](#) exploring the important themes. We commissioned an external company to facilitate the in-person event and produce [a report for us on the findings from that and the online events](#).

23. We also produced a [separate report of our own](#) highlighting the activity we conducted during the development of the Code of Professional Practice, and the conclusions we drew from that work.

Section 3: Proposed Changes to Standards

24. The overall structure, and much of the intent, of the current Code has been retained, based upon stakeholder views gathered in the scoping review.

25. The key changes are:

- i) the addition of 2 new Principles, to:
 - B. Ensure safety and quality in clinical practice
 - H. Foster collaborative healthcare, effective professional relationships and safe, supportive workplace practice
- ii) the inclusion of new standards where evidence indicated gaps
- iii) amendments to strengthen and enhance the clarity of some existing standards
- iv) moving some standards into a different Principle where they fit better.

Principle B: Ensure safety and quality in clinical practice

26. Principle B is about good governance in clinical practice. It encourages a culture of safety, in line with global priorities to eliminate avoidable harms to patients.^{1,2}

27. The themes of the standards in Principle B include:

- reporting, and learning from, safety incidents and ‘near misses’
- planning for emergencies
- engaging in quality improvement activities to assure clinical care.

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

28. Principle H is about the chiropractor’s professional responsibility towards colleagues and working effectively with others in the interests of good quality care.

29. The themes of the standards in Principle H include:

- undertaking collaborative practice³
- working with colleagues effectively and professionally, with specific duties when delegating tasks or supervising others
- demonstrating clinical leadership⁴ including duties to prevent workplace bullying and act when there is a risk of harm.
- supporting and encouraging the development of others.

¹ Coleman, B.C., et al., *The World Federation of Chiropractic Global Patient Safety Task Force: a call to action*. Chiropractic & Manual Therapies, 2024. **32**(1): p. 15.

² World Health Organization, *Global Patient Safety Action Plan*. 2021.

³ World Health Organization, *Framework for action on interprofessional education and collaborative practice*. 2010: Geneva: WHO Press.

⁴ NHS Leadership Academy, *The leadership framework*. 2011.

Themes within the new and amended standards

30. Person-Centred Care

Three new standards in Principle A (alongside other changes) specify the recognised components of Person-Centred Care⁵; and further changes strengthen shared decision-making, clinical care, communication with patients and obtaining consent.

31. Acting in the best interests of the patient

Developments to the standards that supported care in the best interests of patients were refined to focus on outcomes, regardless of clinical setting, following discussions during the Code Conversation. These changes focus on justification of care plans and approaches; meaningful reviews of care; separation of payment plans from the clinical plan of care; and a patient's right to choose who is present while receiving care.

32. Technological advances (including social media).

The Code has been strengthened to specify that technology (including social media, AI and remote consultations) must be used appropriately to enhance practice. There are standards related to health information credibility; the importance of professional boundaries and public health duties online; and new standards around patient dignity.

33. Evidence in practice

The Code highlights the importance of an evidence-based approach to practice and research. When a registrant is relying on their intuition and experience to propose care, the patient must be aware of this for their consent to be valid.

34. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Three new standards address: personal biases, beliefs and values; an active duty to report concerning behaviour by others; and treating people fairly in the workplace. The standard around refusing or discontinuing care of a patient has been strengthened.

35. Boundaries

The current standard around sexual boundaries has been broadened to highlight the abuse of the power and trust as a healthcare professional. It now captures improper emotional and financial relationships, in addition to sexual boundaries.

36. Prevention, health promotion and population health

A new standard sets out a requirement to apply prevention and health promotion interventions and to support population health initiatives.

37. The variety of roles that chiropractors may hold

The Code has been broadened to recognise chiropractors working in education and research, and in a variety of clinical settings. It allows the GCC to regulate all of these appropriately, by broadening some standards to reflect requirements of those who do work within wider services, including the NHS.

⁵ Skills for Health, Health Education England and Skills for Care. *Person-centred Approaches: Empowering people in their lives and communities to enable an upgrade in prevention, wellbeing, health, care and support.* 2017.

Section 4: Additional information available

38. [The Glossary](#) forms part of the Code of Professional Practice by acting as guidance as to the meaning of many of the terms within the Code.
39. The [Changes to the Code Assessment](#) maps in more depth the Principles and standards proposed in the Code of Professional Practice against the previous content of The Code: Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for chiropractors (2016).
40. The [Equality Impact Assessment](#) considers how implementing the Code of Professional Practice could, or will, impact people or groups of people in relation to their protected equality characteristics⁶ (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).
41. The Equality Impact Assessment also considers how implementing the Code of Professional Practice could impact opportunities for a person to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language⁷.

Section 5: Responding to the consultation

42. Responses should be made using the [online consultation questionnaire](#).
43. The consultation questionnaire consists of five sections:
- About you and your interest in chiropractic
 - Your views on the proposed Code of Professional Practice and The Glossary.
 - Your views on the proposed Equality Impact Assessment.
 - About you (Equality and Diversity monitoring)
 - Final Comments
44. Completing the questionnaire online will mean you are only asked questions relevant to your circumstances and will allow you to respond to the consultation in as much, or as little, depth as you would like. Completing the questionnaire online will also help us to easily and quickly assign your comment to the relevant part of the proposed Code.
45. You can choose whether to read each section of the Code of Professional Practice as you complete the consultation questionnaire (you can also turn this functionality off).
46. At the bottom of each page you can save your progress in the questionnaire and return to it at a later date.
47. You are able to print or save a copy of your responses as a document (for your own records) at the end of the consultation.

⁶ [Equality Act 2010](#)

⁷ [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#)

Other ways to contribute to the consultation process

48. If you cannot complete the online questionnaire, you can download and complete the [PDF version of the questionnaire](#) and send it to enquiries@gcc-uk.org.
49. We will be holding events during the consultation. Details will be published on the [consultation page of the website](#). We will be clear which events form part of the formal consultation process, and which are promotional or informational (designed for you to ask questions about the intent behind the suggested standards).

The Format of the Consultation Questionnaire

50. The full questionnaire can be [found online here](#).

Your views on the proposed Code:

51. For each of the Principles within the Code, you will be asked three mandatory questions:

52. Question 1:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the standards within: Principle X: Description of Principle describe the minimum expectations that must be met by registrants in relation to this Principle?*				
Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/>

53. Question 2:

Are there any standards or expected minimum expectations of registrants that you feel are missing from this Principle? *		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know or not sure <input type="checkbox"/>

54. Question 3:

Do you wish to comment further on either this Principle as a whole, or the individual standards within the Principle?*	
Yes, I want to comment on the Principle as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, I want to comment on one or more individual standards	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, I want to comment on both the Principle as a whole AND one or more individual standards	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, I do not want to comment further on this Principle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

55. If you answer “yes” to either question 2 or 3 you will then be asked the following questions (on subsequent pages) to further understand your view.

56. Question 2, part 2:

Could you give a brief description of the standards or minimum expectations of registrants that you feel are missing from this Principle?
(Text Box)

57. Question 3, part 2:

Please share any general comments about the Principle.
(Text Box)

58. Question 3, part 3. This page contains a separate question for each standard.

What are your comments in relation to standard X1? Full wording of standard X1
(Text Box)
What are your comments in relation to standard X2? Full wording of standard X2
(Text Box)

Etc/

Your views on The Glossary:

59. There is a similar set of questions about The Glossary, covering the content, missing definitions and comments on specific terms.

Your views on the Equality Impact Assessment:

60. There is a question asking if the Equality Impact Assessment accurately describes the impact of the Code on individuals with one or more protected characteristics, with a further opportunity to comment if appropriate.

61. There are three questions asking if the Equality Impact Assessment accurately describes the impact of the Code on the Welsh Language, with a further opportunity to comment if appropriate.

About you:

62. The questionnaire asks for some personal details relating to your interest in chiropractic and how you define your personal diversity. Where these questions are mandatory there is a “prefer not to say” option.

Final opportunity for comment

63. There is a final opportunity to add any further comments on the Code and the consultation process.

Do you have any further comments about the proposed Code that you have not included elsewhere in your response?

(Text Box)

Do you have any further comments about this consultation that you have not included elsewhere in your response?

(Text Box)

Information Disclosure Statement

Information in responses, including personal information, may need to be published or disclosed under the access to information regimes (mainly the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

The GCC is a data controller registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ref Z7121966). We use personal data to support our work as the regulatory body for chiropractors. We may share data with third parties to meet our statutory aims and objectives, and when using our powers and meeting our responsibilities.

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

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