

# The Medical Council's performance procedures and activities

## Information for Patients



Comhairle na nDoctúirí Leighis  
Medical Council

Professional Competence  
Reaching for Improvement



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**What are the performance procedures and activities?**

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The Medical Council oversees doctors who practise medicine in Ireland. Doctors now have a legal duty to keep their knowledge and skill up to date, so that they do their job to acceptable standards. Sometimes concerns arise with a doctor's practice. The Medical Council's performance procedures and activities are a new way through which it protects the public in this situation. The procedures and activities help the Medical Council and the doctor to resolve concerns by assessing the doctor's knowledge and skills and ensuring that the doctor is practising to acceptable standards.

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## Who does it apply to?

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All doctors have a legal duty to keep their knowledge and skill up to date by engaging in lifelong learning and skills development. Any doctor may be asked by the Medical Council to participate in its performance procedures and activities to confirm that their practice is satisfactory. Doctors are required by law to cooperate with such a request. In general, the Medical Council will make this request where there is a concern about a doctor's practice and it considers it to be in the interest of the public and the doctor to resolve this concern. A concern may be raised by a patient, a relative, an employer, another doctor or healthcare professional or the Medical Council itself.

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## Will this improve patient safety?

**A**

The Medical Council's performance procedures and activities are a new way through which it protects the public. The Medical Council can now ask a doctor to participate in an assessment and to undertake follow-up action to ensure that their practice is satisfactory. This will help to reassure the public and to support doctors to continue to practise to acceptable standards throughout their professional lives.

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## Does this mean there is a problem with the doctor?

**A**

The Medical Council operates its performance procedures and activities as a safeguard to protect the public and to help doctors to keep their knowledge and skill up to date. If the Medical Council has asked a doctor to participate in its performance procedures and activities, this does not mean that there is a problem. In many cases, assessment of the doctor's knowledge and skill will confirm that their practice is satisfactory. In some cases, there will be areas identified where the doctor will benefit from taking action to improve their knowledge and

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skills. The Medical Council will work with the doctor to ensure that this action is completed. In this way, the Medical Council's performance procedures and activities help to reassure the public and support doctors to continue to practise to acceptable standards throughout their professional lives. If serious concerns about a doctor's practice are identified during an assessment, the Medical Council takes timely and decisive action to safeguard the public.

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## What will the doctor have to do?

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The Medical Council contacts the doctor who has been asked to participate in its performance procedures and activities. Information is gathered about their practice. The doctor takes part in a survey which gathers feedback about their knowledge and skills from other doctors, other healthcare professionals and from patients. An assessment team then visits the doctor at their place of work and examines the doctor's performance in practice. The team includes other doctors as well as a patient representative who have been trained to assess doctor's performance. The assessment visit includes looking at patient records, observing the doctor interacting with patients and interviewing the doctor to understand how they work with patients. Patient records are only ever reviewed by members of the assessment team who are doctors and who are careful to maintain confidentiality. A report is then provided to the doctor which describes areas where practice is satisfactory and any areas where action may be required. The Medical Council reviews this report with the doctors and ensures that they complete any action required to keep their knowledge and skill up to date so that they do their job to acceptable standards.

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## How are patients involved?

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The patient-doctor relationship is important and the Medical Council operates these performance procedures and activities to help to ensure that doctors are keeping their knowledge and skills up to date. Patients are involved in a number of ways. Patients may be asked to complete a survey to give feedback on a doctor. Patients may be asked if a Medical Council assessment team may observe their interaction with the doctor and the assessment team may look at patient records. The team itself includes a patient representative who is not a doctor and who ensures that the patients' point of view is taken into account at all times.

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## Do I have to participate?

**A**

It is possible that, as a result of a concern about a doctor you brought to the attention of the Medical Council, you have been informed that the doctor will be asked to participate in these performance procedures and activities. As a result of your concern, the Medical Council will satisfy itself that the doctor's knowledge and skill are up to date so that they are doing their job to acceptable standards. This is not an investigation of your specific concerns or an inquiry and therefore you will not be required to participate.

It is possible that the doctor you attend has been asked to participate in these performance procedures and activities. This does not necessarily mean that there is a problem with the doctor. You may be invited to give feedback to the Medical Council on your experience of the doctor using a standard questionnaire. You may also be invited to allow the Medical Council assessment team to observe your interaction with the doctor or the assessment team may select your patient record for review. These invitations are an opportunity for the public to become involved in promoting good professional practice amongst doctors. When you are invited to become involved, you can decline and this has no impact on your care.

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## Will my feedback be confidential?

**A**

The confidentiality of any feedback which you provide in the course of the Medical Council's performance procedures and activities is maintained. Your feedback is incorporated into the overall report without identifying you personally. At any time, if you wish to raise a specific concern about an individual doctor with the Medical Council, you may do so and further information is available below.

## Information

To find out more about the role of the Medical Council and to read further detailed information about professional competence, visit our website [www.medicalcouncil.ie](http://www.medicalcouncil.ie). You can contact us at: 01 498 3100 or [info@mcirl.ie](mailto:info@mcirl.ie)

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