The threshold investigation stage

Fitness to practise fact sheet

health & care professions council

What is threshold investigation?

Once we have decided that a concern is something we can deal with, we undertake an investigation.

The purpose of the investigation is to understand as much as possible about the concerns. This helps us decide if the concerns and the information we have gathered amounts to an allegation that the registrant's fitness to practise may be impaired.

We will consider this information against the threshold criteria. We will also consider the information obtained in line with our standards of conduct, performance and ethics and our standards of proficiency.

We call this our threshold investigation stage.

What is happening now?

The case will be allocated to a case manager who is responsible for planning and conducting the investigation. They will write to the participants in the case to introduce themselves and provide their contact details. The case manager will keep you updated on the progress of the investigation. You can contact them to ask questions about the investigation process at any time.

The case manager is independent and does not take anyone's side. They can explain our processes and help you understand any requests for information we may make. They cannot provide legal advice. Case managers can also tell you about sources of support or information during the fitness to practise process. During their investigation, the case manager will collect information about the concern. To do this, they may write to other individuals and organisations to ask them to provide information relevant to the concern. The information collected will be used to decide if the concerns meet our threshold criteria.

The case manager will provide a date for the information requested to be provided. If we have asked you to send us some information and you are not able to provide the information by the date we have given, please let us know. This helps us to plan and progress our investigation as quickly as possible.

What will happen next?

Once the case manager has finished their investigation, the case will be sent to the decision-making team. A senior decision maker will review the case, look at the information collected, and decide if the concerns meet our threshold criteria. The decision will be provided in writing as soon as possible. The registrant, their employer, and the person who raised the concern will be given copies of the decision.

We will contact you to let you know when the case has been sent to the decision-making team.

How long does the threshold investigation take?

We aim to complete this stage of our process within three months. Sometimes we need more time. This can happen if other organisations are also investigating the same concerns, or if the investigation is complex. The case manager will keep everyone up to date.

Jargon buster

Case manager

Each case has a named case manager. Case managers are neutral and do not take anyone's side. They can answer questions about the process and provide updates. They cannot provide legal advice.

Complainant

This is the person who told us about the concerns.

Concerns

Information about a registrant which suggests they may not have the skills, knowledge or character to practise safely and effectively.

Employer

This is the person or organisation that a registrant works for or was working for previously. We sometimes need to write to an employer to help us find a person on our Register.

Impaired fitness to practise

A concern about the conduct, competence, health or character of a registrant. The concern must be serious enough to suggest that the registrant is unfit or unsafe to practise without restriction, or at all.

Senior decision maker

An employee of the HCPC who is responsible for reviewing cases and decides if they meet the threshold to be investigated further.

Threshold

Another name for the stage of our investigation before a threshold decision is made.

Threshold policy

A policy which explains our approach to investigating concerns about professionals on our Register, or decision-making process, and how we apply our threshold criteria. You can read the full policy on our **website**.

Threshold criteria

A set of criteria that decision makers consider when assessing whether the information we have received meets the threshold criteria. It can be found on page 5 of the threshold policy. This is sometimes called the threshold test.

Participants

The people or organisations involved in a case. The participants may be the complainant, the registrant and/or their employer.

Registrant

A health and care professional who is on our Register

Standards of conduct performance and ethics

They set out, in general terms, how we expect our registrants to behave. They can be found on our **website**.

Standards of proficiency

They set out the minimum standards we consider necessary to protect the public. There are a specific set of standards of proficiency for each profession we regulate. The standards of proficiency can be found on our **website**.