

Controlled drugs

This section provides information about our role and the legal responsibilities of healthcare providers that handle controlled drugs.

What we do

We make sure that controlled drugs are managed safely. We do this by:

- checking how different regulators and agencies work together
- giving [guidance and tools to healthcare providers](#)
- leading the [Controlled Drugs National Group](#)
- reporting to the government about how partner organisations work together
- assessing and overseeing how health and social care providers manage controlled drugs
- taking part in local intelligence networks led by NHS England. These networks bring together organisations from:
 - NHS and independent health sectors
 - responsible bodies, regulators, and agencies, including the [General Pharmaceutical Council](#), [NHS Counter Fraud Authority](#) and police services.

Our reports

View our latest report on [the safer use of controlled drugs](#) which highlights our regulatory oversight activities and assessment findings.

The law

Visit [GOV.UK](#) to view UK government legislation:

[Health Act 2006: Part 3 Chapter 1](#)

[The Misuse of Drugs \(Safe Custody\) Regulations 1973](#)

[Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001](#)

[Regulations Statutory Instrument 2013 No. 2013/373](#)

Government guidance

View the Department of Health's guidance on [controlled drugs regulation](#).

Relevant websites

[Department of Health](#)

[General Pharmaceutical Council](#)

[Health Professions Council](#)

[Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#)

[NHSBSA Prescription Services](#)

[NHS Counter Fraud Authority](#)

[NHS England](#)

[NICE medicines and prescribing support](#)

[Nursing and Midwifery Council](#)

[Public Health England](#)

[The Home Office](#)

See also

[Cannabis-based medicinal products](#)

Provider guidance and tools

Here we list information, guidance and tools to help you manage controlled drugs safely.

Adult social care

[Care home advice](#)

[Home care advice](#)

Primary care

[GP mythbusters](#)

[Dental mythbusters](#)

[Primary care self-assessment tool](#)

Secondary care

[Secondary care self-assessment tool](#)

Controlled drug accountable officers

Controlled drug accountable officers (CDAOs) are responsible for managing all aspects of controlled drugs in their organisation.

The roles and responsibilities of CDAOs, and the need to appoint them, are governed by the [Controlled Drugs \(Supervision of Management and Use\) Regulations 2013](#).

Organisations that must appoint a CDAO and then register their details with us:

- NHS trusts
- Independent hospitals in England
- NHS England Local Area Teams
- Headquarters in England of the regular or reserved Armed Forces

Who can be a CDAO

A CDAO must:

- be a senior manager of their organisation
- not routinely supply or handle controlled drugs themselves as part of their duties as an employee or officer.

How to [notify us when appointing or changing your accountable officer](#).

A group of designated bodies of the same type can jointly nominate and appoint a CDAO. Each designated body within the group must notify us of the CDAO.

Social enterprise organisations (SEOs) and Community Interest Companies (CICs) must appoint a CDAO for locations that the regulations defined as a 'hospital'. In other cases they could appoint a lead to ensure controlled drug governance arrangements are in place.

CDAO notification form

How to notify us

This form is protected. Contact us at enquiries@cqc.org.uk with your name, role and organisation, and we will email the authorisation code to you.

[Notify us online](#)

After you have submitted your completed form, we will email a PDF copy of the form to you containing the information you have submitted. If you do not receive this within 48 hours of submitting your form, or you have difficulty accessing or completing the form, please email enquiries@cqc.org.uk.

When you need to inform us about changes

You must use our online form to tell us if you:

- appoint a new CDAO (whether permanent or temporary)
- re-register with us (when your organisation re-registers with us you will need to submit a new CDAO notification)
- remove a CDAO.

The CDAO position must remain filled at all times.

Changes to your CDAO's contact details

Let us know changes to your CDAO's phone number or email address by emailing us at CDAOregisterdata@cqc.org.uk.

You need to provide:

- the name of the accountable officer
- the name of the organisation
- amended details.

You must do this as soon as possible. Their new information will appear in the next update of the register.

We can only accept contact detail changes through this mailbox, if you are changing your CDAO you must submit an online notification.

CDAO exemption form

Some organisations do not need to appoint a CDAO. This section explains these exemptions and how to notify us.

How to notify us

This online form is protected. Contact us at enquiries@cqc.org.uk with your name, role, and organisation, and we will email you the authorisation code.

Notify us online

After you submit your completed form, we will email you a PDF copy with the information you provided. If you do not get this within 48 hours or have trouble with the form, email enquiries@cqc.org.uk.

When you can apply for an exemption

You can apply for an exemption from appointing a CDAO if:

- fewer than 10 people work at the hospital
- appointing a CDAO would cause more problems than benefits. This looks at the number of employees, level of activities, and difficulty finding a suitable person.

If you get an exemption because of fewer than 10 staff:

- your organisation will be removed from the CDAO register
- you do not need to submit more notifications unless the situation changes.

If we grant an exemption because appointing a CDAO would be disproportionate:

- it will last up to one year, ending on 31 December each year
- you must renew the exemption within one month of its expiry.

We can cancel the exemption at any time but will give you reasonable notice.

If we decline your application or cancel an exemption, you can appeal the decision in writing within one month of the date of our letter informing you of the decision.

Find out more about the [controlled drug designated body exemption appeal process](#).

Self-assessment tools

These are Excel spreadsheets that contain macros. When you open them, select 'enable macros' to ensure the RAG (red, amber, green) ratings work.

Tool for primary care

[Controlled drugs governance self-assessment tool for primary care organisations](#)

Tool for secondary care

[Controlled drugs governance self-assessment tool for secondary care organisations](#)

Find out more

[The safer management of controlled drugs: annual reports](#)

Register of accountable officers in England

We record the details of healthcare organisations' CDAOs in a published register, which we update monthly.

View our current register:

[Register of accountable officers](#) (ods, 108.41kB, English)

[The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority maintains and publishes the details of Fertility centres' CDAOs](#)

Legislation

[Controlled Drugs \(Supervision of Management and Use\) Regulations 2013](#)

Cannabis products for medicinal use

CQC provides guidance for providers who prescribe, or are considering proscribing, cannabis products for medicinal use.

Use the links below to find out what we expect and look for:

[What CQC expects from providers](#)

Controlled Drugs National Group

The Controlled Drugs National Group is led by CQC. It looks at national controlled drugs governance in England.

It provides collaboration, consistency and assurance to government by:

- sharing intelligence
- highlighting good practice and areas of concern
- reporting on the impact of controlled drugs arrangements

Membership of the national group

Care Quality Commission

Department of Health

General Medical Council

General Pharmaceutical Council

Health and Social Care Information Centre

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales

Medicines Advice (Medicines and Prescribing Centre) National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

Ministry of Defence

National Police Chiefs' Council

NHS Counter Fraud Authority

NHS England (including Health and Justice Commissioning)

The Home Office

UK Anti-doping

Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Sub-Groups

4 sub-groups provide expert advice to the national group and issue newsletters. They cover these aspects of controlled drugs:

- theft and fraud
- monitoring prescribing
- safe prescribing, dispensing and administration
- policy and operational issues

Sub-group members are from the national group as well as invited specialists.

Sub-Group newsletters

These newsletters report the group's findings. They point you to guidance and share examples of good practice and local initiatives. Providers may follow different approaches based on their local needs.

Latest newsletters

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: April 2021](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: December 2020](#)

This gives an example of how a specific organisation responded locally to safety concerns around Alfentanil.

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: July 2020](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: April 2020](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: December 2019](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: July 2019](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: December 2018](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: August 2018](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: May 2018](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: volume 2, December 2017](#)

[Controlled Drugs National Group newsletter: volume 1, September 2017](#)

Previous newsletters and guidance

See our [earlier newsletters and guidance on safety incidents and checklists](#) on the National Archives.

Useful links and guidance

Legislation and guidance on GOV.UK

[The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001](#)

[The Misuse of Drugs \(Safe Custody\) Regulations 1973](#)

[The Controlled Drugs \(Supervision of Management and Use\) Regulations 2013](#)

National Institute for Health and Care

[The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence NG46 guidance](#)

Department of Health and Social Care guidance

[Controlled Drugs \(Supervision of management and use\) Regulations 2013](#)

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