

Guidelines for Registrants in Private Practice

Version:	1.0
Date:	April 2026
Doc Ref:	#128
Review date:	April 2029

Version number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
1.0	To outline the considerations for registrants in Private Practice	Jude Savage	April 2026

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Considerations
 - a. Standards
 - b. Professional support structures
 - c. Indemnity insurance
 - d. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
 - e. Advertising standards and provision of Information to the public
 - f. Social media
 - g. Terms and conditions of treatment (including fees)
 - h. Premises and equipment, health and safety (including personal safety)
 - i. Independent regulators
 - j. Accreditation services
 - k. Personal risk
 - l. Safeguarding and risk reporting
 - m. Other training
 - n. Referral pathways
 - o. Complaint handling processes and escalation to AHCS
 - p. General business considerations
 - q. Useful resources

1. Introduction

AHCS registrants work in a variety of settings, mostly in the NHS. The rest work for large private healthcare companies, or in smaller private practices, either with other healthcare professionals or as sole practitioners. Those working in group practices may do so as an employee, or they may be self-employed sub-contractors.

Working outside the NHS is different from working within it. What needs to be considered will be influenced by the individual's place of work and the legal basis on which they undertake that work. The purpose of this document is to outline the main issues to be aware of and to provide guidance for those practicing either alone, or in practices with other healthcare professionals. It is important for registrants to be clear on their responsibilities and to understand their liabilities.

This document provides guidance only. It does not constitute legal advice. Registrants are strongly advised to ensure they have access to professional legal services as appropriate.

2. Considerations

a. Standards

Irrespective of the work setting all registrants work to the same standards, these are.

- Good Scientific Practice (GSP)
- Standards of Proficiency
- Scope of Practice
- Standards for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

GSP applies to all registrants, the standards of proficiency and scope of practice are specific to the profession concerned. Full information can be found on the AHCS website under the standards, rules and guidance section for each part of the PSA Accredited Register:

Healthcare Science Practitioner

<https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/registration/psa-accredited-register/healthcare-science-practitioner-register/standards-rules-guidance/>

Higher Specialist Scientists

<https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/registration/psa-accredited-register/higher-specialist-scientist-register/standards-rules-guidance/>

Life Science Industry

<https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/registration/psa-accredited-register/life-science-industry/standards-rules-guidance/>

Clinical Research Practitioners

<https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/registration/psa-accredited-register/clinical-research-practitioners/standards-rules-guidance/>

It is also essential that registrants continue to fulfill the requirements for the annual renewal of registration by completing the necessary sections in the Registrant Portal. This includes Good character and health declarations and acknowledgment of adherence to AHCS standards including Continuing Professional Development.

b. Professional support structures

Professional support is essential for those working outside traditional NHS settings. This can provide a support network to ensure continued safe professional practice and development. Interactive CPD activities for those in independent practice are highly recommended to maintain professional interaction. Professional networking may be supplemented by clinical and peer supervision and for example making arrangements for external quality audits by suitable qualified colleagues.

c. Indemnity insurance

NHS indemnity covers practice within the public sector. When working for an independent healthcare provider, registrants must check that there is a comparable arrangement in place.

As an AHCS registrant, you are required to state whether you practise independently and confirm that you have appropriate indemnity insurance coverage, should this be the case.

Appropriate cover is a condition of registration.

Those working alone as sole traders or providing contracted services to other healthcare organisations must secure appropriate indemnity insurance to protect against patient claims and complaints.

There are several insurers who can provide appropriate cover, including most of the well-known insurers. Alternatively insurance brokers will look for insurers that best fit the needs

of their clients – the British Insurance Brokers Association website may be a good place to start: <https://www.biba.org.uk/>.

AHCS cannot recommend specific companies.

d. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

The majority of AHCS registrants must provide a DBS certificate appropriate to their country of work as part of the initial registration process. It is recommended that registrants keep the appropriate documentation current via the available updating services. Arrangements vary between the devolved nations i.e. levels of DBS and who can apply for what, with each country represented by different individual organisations. These are:

- **England and Wales** – Disclosure and Barring Service [Disclosure and Barring Service - GOV.UK](#)
- **Scotland** – Disclosure Scotland [Disclosure Scotland - Disclosure Scotland](#)
- **Northern Ireland** – NI direct Government services [Access NI criminal record checks | nidirect](#)

e. Advertising standards and provision of information to the public

Registrants must carefully consider the information provided to patients, which includes but is not limited to; digital (website/social media/email, etc), and paper(patient information leaflets, aftercare instructions, etc). This should include clear evidence-based information for services offered, including benefits and risks of treatment in formats that are easily accessible to all.

If registrants have a public business website and or use social media, it is recommended they check the information posted, to make sure that it is accurate and up to date. Websites and other information sources should be reviewed periodically. It is also important to be aware of and comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (known as WCAG), which are an internationally recognised set of recommendations for improving web accessibility. <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service/understanding-wcag>

It is also important to be aware of UK advertising standards to ensure compliance. These can be found on the Advertising Standards Authority Website - <https://www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/healthcare-overview.html>.

Registrants must also adhere to the conditions of use of the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) quality mark in any business materials. Details can be found on the AHCS website <https://www.ahcs.ac.uk/who-accredits-our-register/>

f. Social media

AHCS expectations on use of social media are covered in separate guidance:

<https://documents.ahcs.ac.uk/docs/67/-064-AHCS-Social-Media-Guidance-for-Registrants-v1.1-February-2022.pdf>. This explains how to use social media in a way which meets the AHCS Standards and is consistent with guidance from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). It is divided into 3 sections:

- **Section 1** - top tips for using social media.
- **Section 2** - guidance on how our standards relate to using social media and some relevant issues you may come across.
- **Section 3** - information about how to find out more information.

g. Terms and conditions of treatment (including fees)

Registrants should state the terms and conditions for the services offered including follow up. Fees should be clearly stated.

It is good practice to make sure that that all fees are agreed in writing prior to treatment. This will help clear up any issues that may arise later.

h. Premises and equipment, health and safety (including personal safety)

Registrants must be aware of and meet all health and safety requirements for their working environment.

It is essential to ensure that the premises where care and treatment are delivered are hygienic, appropriate for the intended purpose, suitably located and accessible to all. Additionally, equipment that is used to diagnose, deliver care and treatment must be clean, suitable for the intended purpose, maintained, and stored correctly. This includes keeping records of quality control and maintenance where appropriate. There must also be awareness of the boundaries of legal responsibility when using third parties e.g. independent professionals/contractors and suppliers.

Registrants must also consider the procedures, including appropriate equipment, if emergency care was required in the premises i.e. life support measures including resuscitation.

i. Independent healthcare regulators

The independent health and social care regulators for the UK provide information on a number of requirements for good practice, including the areas of premises and equipment. As with DBS checks, arrangements vary between the UK countries, e.g., the requirement to register private practices and associated inspections.

England - Care Quality Commission (CQC) <https://www.cqc.org.uk/>

Scotland - Care Inspectorate <https://www.careinspectorate.com/>

Wales - Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) - <https://www.hiw.org.uk/independent-healthcare-services-0>

Northern Ireland - The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority - <https://www.rqia.org.uk/>

j. Accreditation of health and social care services

Applying for accreditation is an important consideration for those providing independent health services. The UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) is the main provider of accreditation and certification services in the UK. Accreditation demonstrates that providers have undergone a rigorous process to ensure that high quality services are delivered by competent staff in safe environments. Full information can be found on the UKAS website: [Health and Social Care Sector Accreditation | UKAS](#)

k. Personal risk

It is important for Registrants to ensure their own wellbeing as well as that of their patients/clients. A full consideration of personal risk is essential for all healthcare scientists working in different settings, particularly alone.

l. Safeguarding, risk reporting and patient safety

Safeguarding and risk reporting form part of the mandatory training programme run by individual trusts within the NHS. It may also form part of mandatory training provided by non-NHS or private healthcare organisations. For registrants working outside these structures it is vital that alternative arrangements are made to ensure that individuals remain up to date with safeguarding knowledge, including reporting and escalating concerns. Registrants should also be aware of how to “speak up” about patient safety concerns and resources for facilitating better patient safety in general. The organisation “Protect” provides support services for both individuals and employers. Free and confidential legal advice is available to individuals. <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

m. Other training

It is also important for registrants to consider other forms of mandatory training delivered in traditional NHS environments, e.g., manual handling, life support and infection control. These will likely be applicable to private practice so it is advisable to keep up to date and

document all relevant training. These skills/competencies may be arranged with external education providers via a number of methods, including online learning.

n. Referral pathways

Registrants must ensure there are established appropriate referral pathways for those in their care, should this be indicated based on clinical findings. It is important to explain clearly to patients how communications about their diagnosis and treatment to other healthcare professionals, e.g. their GP, will be managed.

o. Complaint Handling Processes and Escalation to AHCS

It is good practice for registrants to have an advertised complaints process for care and treatment, which should be clear, fair and accessible to all, including those using the service, people acting on their behalf and other stakeholders. This should signpost routes for escalation to the appropriate organisations should a dispute remain unresolved. All complaints must be investigated thoroughly and any necessary action taken where failures have been identified. There should also be information provided about when it is appropriate to escalate concerns to AHCS [Raise a Concern - The Academy For Healthcare Science](#).

As an example, the Dental Complaints service has identified six principles of complaint handling. These act as a useful guide for producing best practice processes for independent environments of working:

Their six core principles are:

1. All of your feedback is important to us.
2. We want to make it easy for you to raise a concern if you need to.
3. We follow a complaints procedure and keep you informed.
4. We will try to answer all your questions and any concerns you raise.
5. We want you to have a positive experience making a complaint.
6. Your feedback helps us to improve our service.

<https://dcs.gdc-uk.org/professionals/complaints-handling-best-practice>

p. General business considerations

In addition to the clinical aspects and considerations in delivering good care, there are also a number of legal business elements to be addressed. These include but are not limited to.

- Type of company – e.g. sole trader, VAT registered

- Taxation
- Insurances e.g. Indemnity and public liability
- Business banking
- Legal contractual arrangements for care and associated record keeping
- Data Protection (Information Commissioners Office (ICO) assessment, secure storage, data retention policy, Subject Access Request process)

Again, we recommend seeking appropriate professional business, financial and legal advice to ensure compliance in accordance with relevant regulations and law.

Making the transition from NHS working to other environments is a big step, it is vital that this is carefully and fully considered. Additional support may be available from a registrant's specific professional body which may include networking opportunities with those who have successfully made the transition into independent/private practice environments. But with proper planning and preparation, registrants should be able to practice safely and successfully in the private sector either as sole practitioners or as employees or contractors for other healthcare organisations.

q. Useful resources

In addition to the ones already provided, the following links contain useful resources to explore in relation to independent/private practice environments.

Information Commissioners Office ICO - [Data protection self assessment - medium businesses | ICO](#)

HM Revenue & Customs HMRC - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs>

Patient Safety Learning - <https://www.pslhub.org/>

National Guardian's Office - [About Us - National Guardian's Office](#)

CQC Whistleblowing Policy - [Whistleblowing Guidance for providers who are registered with the Care Quality Commission v5](#)

Dental complaints Service - <https://dcs.gdc-uk.org/professionals/complaints-handling-best-practice>

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - BACP Private Practice Guidelines [BABCP-Private-Practice-Guidelines-April-2023.pdf](#)

Advertising Standards Authority <https://www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/healthcare-overview.html>

British Medical Association - <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/private-practice/working-in-private-practice/consultants-and-private-practice>

NHS Employers - <https://www.nhsemployers.org/system/files/2021-06/consultants-code-of-conduct-private-practice-guide.pdf>