

The Department of Health's Consultation Document

How to write to your MP about it

Remember that the deadline for responses to the Department of Health is November 2nd, so please write as soon as possible.

Please contact your MP to ask he or she to take up your concern with the responsible Minister - Ann Keen MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health. You could ask your MP if he/she is aware that the Department of Health has issued a Consultation Document and ask him/her to write the Health Minister to seek reassurance that the statutory route is not being abandoned.

How to contact your MP

If you are not sure who your MP is then you can find out at <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/> or telephone the House of Commons Information office on 020 7219 4272.

Telephoning with a simple question might get a faster response than writing. You will talk to a relevant office or have to leave a message. Phone the House of Commons switchboard on 020 7219 3000 and ask for your MP by name.

You can also contact your MP through their local constituency office. Addresses and contact numbers will be listed in local libraries, town halls, an MP's personal website or through the House of Commons Information Office.

By letter. When writing to any MP the address to use is: House of Commons London SW1A 0AA.

By email. The majority of MPs now have email addresses that you can write to.

It does not matter if your letter or email is short. A brief letter or email can have a big impact.

We encourage you to choose one or two (or as many more as you would like) of the points below when making your response and to try and make it your own. It might help to state what your interest is, e.g. that you are a patient; a practitioner; a parent or carer of someone who uses herbal medicine; are reliant on herbal medicine yourself or have found it to greatly benefit you; feel worried that you might lose access to it; are concerned that without statutory regulation your herbalist/RCHM member may no longer be able to practice, or whatever is true for you.

Below are some key points you can make:

1) Statutory regulation is in the public interest as it means that the public wishing to consult herbalists can be assured that they are well trained and competent at their job. Should any practitioner be found seriously wanting, he or she can be struck off the practitioners' register. Voluntary regulation cannot deliver this and any other licensing system will do nothing to ensure that high quality training and professional development is maintained across the UK.

2) If herbal/traditional medicine practitioners are not statutorily regulated, it will not be legal for doctors and other healthcare professional who are statutorily regulated to make referrals to them. This is certainly not in the interests of patients who wish that the health professionals they consult all work together in a complementary fashion on their behalf.

3) Only statutory regulation can allow herbal/traditional medicine practitioners to access finished herbal products supplied by a herb company. Because statutory regulation will enable practitioners to be recognised as 'authorised health professionals' under the main European Medicines Directive, this will enable practitioners to order up herbal remedies from herbal suppliers for individual patients. Since this is done under Government licence, the quality of these products will be assured.

4) Without statutory regulation, when legislation changes in 2011, the supply of medicinal herbal pills, tablets, capsules, dried herb mixtures and medicinal herbal ointments made up for individual patients by third-party suppliers will come to a halt. Also under threat are third-party herbal prescription services that supply individualised herbal prescriptions (including tinctures and dried herbs) to named patients at the practitioner's request.

5) Over the past 40 years this mode of supply has become an essential part of herbal practice in the UK and many practitioners are totally reliant on such services. The loss of this facility will put many practitioners and several of their suppliers out of business. This will further damage the UK economy and swell unemployment during the current economic downturn.

6) To make matters worse many patients will be forced to turn to internet supply. Unfortunately, these remedies often lack any reliable quality assurance and some have been found to be illegally mixed with conventional drugs. For these reasons statutory regulation is the only sensible way forward.

7) Ministers must be called to account for this threatened U-turn and asked how they can justify the reduced public choice and increased public risk if statutory regulation does not go ahead.

Please pass this message on to your friends, family, colleagues and anyone you know who believes that the public should have access to herbal medicines, prescribed by properly trained herbalists.

**Thank you so much for taking the time to do this!
We are most grateful.**

**If you have any queries about any of the issues below, or about what is required of you, please contact the RCHM's office manager, Sue Harris or Emma Farrant, secretary & treasurer:
Post: Office 5, Ferndale Business Centre, 1 Exeter Street, Norwich, NR2 4QB.
Telephone: 01603 623994 Fax: 01603 667557
Email: herbmed@rchm.co.uk Website contact form at: www.rchm.co.uk**