

Overview report

Taking people off GP lists



An overview report explains

- what we learned and
- how things could be made better.

About NIPSO



NIPSO stands for the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman



The Ombudsman checks that **public services** treat people fairly.

Public services include health care, social care, housing, and government bodies.

What the Ombudsman can do



We can look at complaints from people.

We collect information and decide whether or not to have an investigation.



We can also start investigations even if no one has made a complaint.

We do this if we have a good reason to think something serious is going wrong again and again.



Our investigations look at

➤ **Maladministration**

This means that a public service has not done its job properly.



➤ **Systemic maladministration**

This means the same problems keep happening again and again.

What this report is about



Primary health care is the first help you get close to home if you feel unwell.

For example, help from a GP Practice, a dentist, or a pharmacist.



To get health care from a GP Practice you need to be **registered** with them.

This means the GP Practice has your name on their list.



Some people told us that they were taken off GP lists unfairly.

We looked into these complaints.

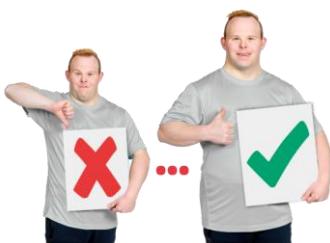


We also spoke with staff who work in GP Practices and groups that speak up for GPs.



We wanted to

1. understand how GP Practices take people off their lists
2. find out if GP Practices follow the law and guidance
3. find ways to make things better.



This report tells you what we found out.

Laws and guidance

What we found out



There are rules about how a GP Practice can take a patient off their list.

Some GP Practices did not follow these rules.

No one checked if the rules were followed.



Some people were taken off GP lists without a warning.



Some people were taken off lists without checking if they had moved home.



Some family members were taken off lists because of a problem with their relative.

What needs to be made better



Guidance needs to be clearer and give more information.

Putting the customer first

What we found out



Some people were taken off GP lists without a warning.

Some people were not told why the GP Practice was unhappy with their behaviour.



Some people were taken off GP lists without being told at all.

What needs to be made better



An **independent review** could check if patients are taken off GP lists fairly.

An independent review is a fair way to check if a decision was right.



Better guidance could support talking and mediation.

Mediation means trying to fix a problem by bringing someone in to help you talk together.

Fair decisions

What we found out



Guidance says a person must not be taken off a GP list

- for making a complaint or
- because they are related to someone who was taken off a GP list



Some people were taken off GP lists for these reasons.

This is not fair.

What needs to be made better



GP Practices need better guidance to help them make fair decisions.



GP Practices need help to decide when a relationship with a patient is over.

Putting things right



The Department of Health is already working on making things better.

It has



- asked GP Practices to send in their **policies** for taking patients off their lists.

Policies are written rules an organisation follows.

- asked to talk to the **Business Services Organisation** about checking requests to take patients of GP lists.

The Business Services Organisation gives support services for health and social care, like paying GPs and managing records.



If our ideas to make things better happen then we hope that

- Fewer people will be taken off GP lists.



- Patients will have less stress and disruption.



- There will be less time spent taking people off and putting them back on GP lists.

Final decision



NIPSO will not start a full investigation right now.

This gives time for things to be made better.