



General
Chiropractic
Council

Fitness to Practise Annual Report 2024



Contents

- Introduction3
- About Fitness to Practise (FtP)3
- Fitness to Practise in 2024 - summary6
- Performance summary7
- Complaints received8
- Investigating Committee 15
- Professional Conduct Committee 17
- Health Committee 18
- Interim Suspension hearings 20
- Section 32 complaints 21

Introduction

This report published annually sets out information relating to the various stages in the fitness to practise process, the volume and type of complaints received and our performance in managing those complaints.

About Fitness to Practise (FtP)

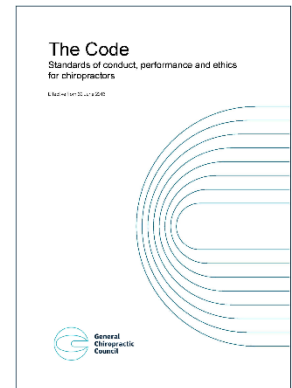
The Code

The Code represents the benchmark of conduct and practice against which chiropractors are measured.

The Code became effective from 30 June 2016 replacing the Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency (2010).

The Code is arranged around eight principles that require chiropractors to:

- Put the health interests of patients first
- Act with honesty and integrity and maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct
- Provide a good standard of clinical care and practice
- Establish and maintain a clear professional relationship with patients
- Obtain informed consent for all aspects of patient care
- Communicate properly and effectively with patients, colleagues and other healthcare professionals
- Maintain, develop and work within professional knowledge and skills
- Maintain and protect patient information



Investigating complaints

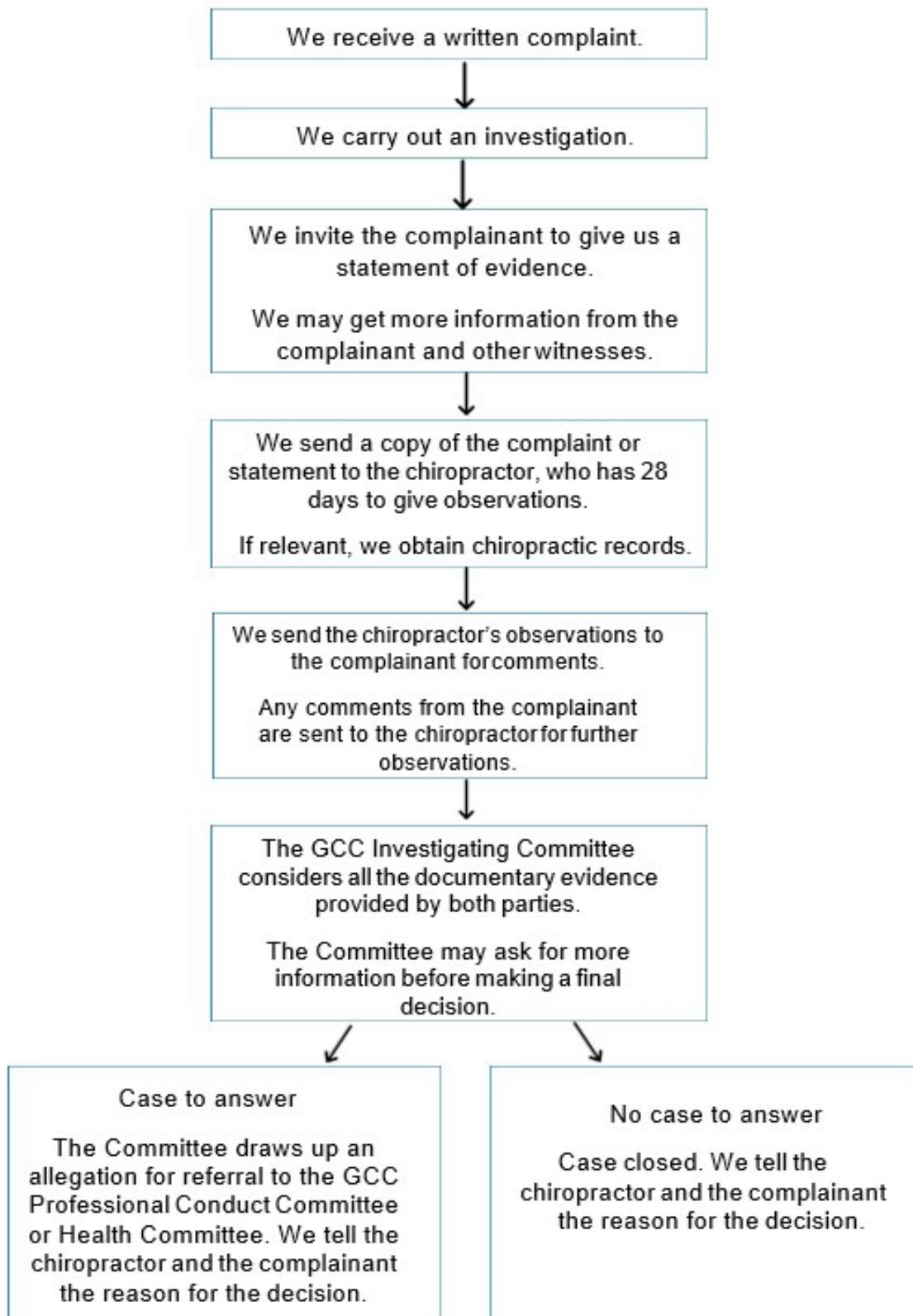
The GCC must investigate any complaint made about a registrant. The types of complaint it can investigate are:

- Treatment, care or advice given by a chiropractor
- The professional or personal behaviour of a chiropractor
- Serious impairment of fitness to practise due to the physical or mental health of a chiropractor

What complaints are the GCC unable to investigate?

- The GCC can only investigate registered chiropractors
- The GCC regulates individual chiropractors and does not accept complaints against clinics
- The GCC cannot resolve matters that relate solely to payment
- The GCC has no power in relation to compensation whatsoever

The investigating process followed by the GCC fitness to practise team is as follows:



Fitness to Practise in 2024 - summary

Our focus in 2024 was to continue to improve and streamline our regulatory processes, further protecting patients, working towards swifter resolution for the benefit of complainants and registrants alike.

Having undertaken a scoping review in 2022 as to how investigations of fitness to practise could be sped up as well as reduce costs by the introduction of clinical advisers, we concluded there were many potential advantages in the introduction of clinical advisers. The new model went live from August 2023 and in 2024, the GCC routinely instructed clinical advisers to provide clinical input into fitness to practise investigations.

In 2024, we worked on developing a new Case Management System (CMS) for the Investigation team. The introduction of an improved CMS aims to enhance efficiency, accuracy and reduce administrative burdens within the team leading to quicker complaint resolution. The CMS went live in January 2025.

The meetings of the Investigating Committee (IC) proceeded to be held virtually as agreed in 2021.

There were 63 fitness to practise concerns requiring investigation in the year. This was a 4.55% decrease in the number received compared to 2023. The reasons are difficult to discern, albeit the number received in 2021 were similar to this year, indicating that 2022 was somewhat unusual.

However, we received slightly higher referrals this year (five) requiring urgent consideration for interim suspension due to the nature of the concerns. A suspension order was made against one of the five registrants. Despite the small number of suspensions granted, we must remain vigilant where concerns identified represent a potential risk to patients.

In 2024, nine cases were referred for hearings before the Professional Conduct Committee. Two of the hearings were listed and determined in 2024 with the remaining seven hearings carried forward into 2025 for completion. The median number of weeks taken from the receipt of the complaint to consideration by the PCC was 123 weeks.

Whilst the volume of complaints received in 2024 compared to 2023 are similar, with some of these complaints raising serious concerns, they represent a small proportion of the number of treatments carried out by chiropractors.

Performance summary

		2024	2023	2022	2021
Number of cases concluded by Investigating Committee		58	52	60	82
Number of cases concluded by Investigating Committee with the following outcome:	No Case to Answer	49	42	48	73
	Referral to Professional Conduct Committee	9	10	12	9
Number of cases concluded by Professional Conduct Committee		11	11	10	11
Number of registrants removed ('erased') from the register		1	1	1	2
Number of registrants suspended from the register		0	1	1	1
Number of registrants receiving a conditions of practice order		1	2	0	0
Number of registrants receiving an admonishment		3	1	3	2
Time from receipt of initial complaint to the final Investigating Committee decision (in weeks):	Median	57	58	48	36
	Longest case	133	111	163	123
	Shortest case	15	9	11	8
Time from receipt of initial complaint to the final PCC decision (in weeks):	Median	123	102	94	122
Number of open cases (at the end of the year) which are older than:	52 weeks	15	7	10	13
	104 weeks	1	1	0	4
	156 weeks	1	0	0	0

Key points

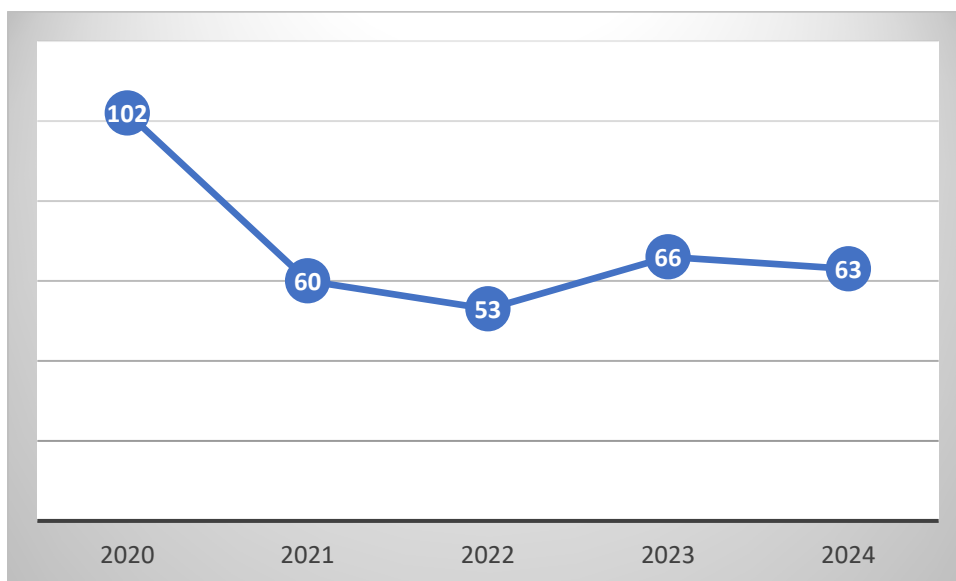
- In 2024, the number of complaints received about chiropractors' fitness to practise decreased by 4.55% compared to 2023.
- A higher number of cases were concluded by the Investigating Committee in 2024 compared to 2023.
- Of the 63 complaints made, they were made about 59 chiropractors.
- Most complaints were received from patients or relatives of patients.

- Most complaints related to clinical care and communication.
- Of the cases concluded by the Investigating Committee, 9 of these were referred to a Professional Conduct Committee hearing.
- Five chiropractors were found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct by the Professional Conduct Committee.

Complaints received

In 2024, the GCC received 63 complaints about chiropractors, a 4.55% decrease in complaints compared to 2023. Over the last five years, the GCC has, on average, received 68 complaints per year.

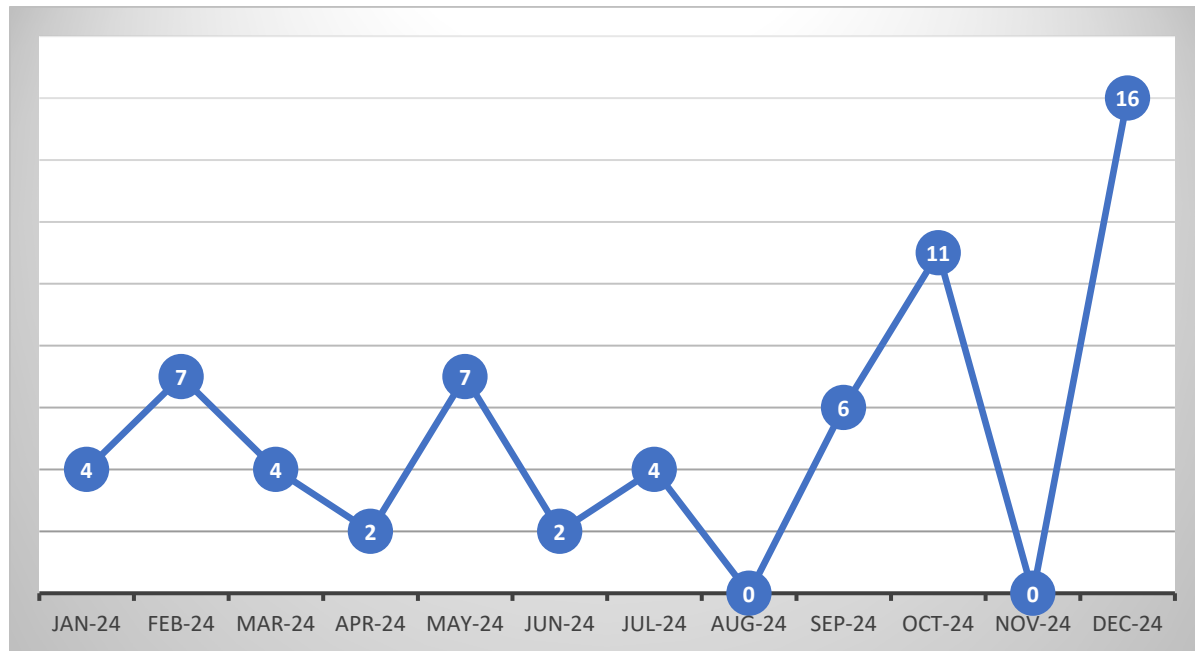
The complaints related to 59 registered chiropractors.



Complaints received by month

Like the previous year, on average we received 5 complaints per month with a peak of 16 complaints received in December.

General Chiropractic Council **Fitness to Practise Annual Report 2024**



Source of complaints

Most complaints are made by a patient or a relative of a patient, accounting for 63 of the complaints received in 2024.

Source of complaint	Number
Patient/Relative of	38
Other Chiropractor/Clinic where worked	3
Public Sector Org (e.g. Police)	3
Member of public/private org. – Ensure not the Patient	8
Registrar	0
Self-Referral	1
Anonymous	6
Referrer Unknown	0
GCC Research	0
Other Healthcare Professional	3
Professional Association	1
Total	63

Nature of complaints

Understanding the nature and volumes of complaints contributes to the development of the profession. We want to support the profession by being transparent about complaints and where necessary provide guidance where there are common themes or trends – so that the learning shared informs practice.

Importantly, allegations raised are just that, *allegations*. Whether or not these are proven is not a consideration in this section of the report, and in highlighting serves to aid understanding where complaints have been made.

Our approach

A complaint received by the GCC is reviewed by a member of the fitness to practise team, who completes an initial case report recording the allegation and issues raised by the complainant. This case report records all allegations made, including where more than one allegation is made by a complainant. This explains why the number of allegations (185) is greater than the number of complaints received in the year (63)

Cases are assigned a category and broken down into type and, in some cases, subtype. For example, a complaint concerning injury from treatment is categorised as *clinical care*, the type would be *substandard treatment* and the subtype *rough or aggressive treatment causing injury/pain*.

Category	Type	Subtype
Clinical care	e.g. substandard treatment/inadequate record keeping etc.	e.g. Rough/aggressive treatment causing injury/pain

Nature of complaint by category

Most complaints contain more than two allegations about the chiropractor. The highest number of allegations made in a complaint was 8.

Of the 63 complaints received, there were 120 allegations of a failing relating to *clinical care*.

In 40 separate complaints there was an allegation of a failing in *communication/consent or professional relationships*.

In 12 cases there was an allegation made about a chiropractor's *probity*.

All allegations made are listed in the table below.

Base: 63 cases (received in 2024)

Nature of Complaint	Number of allegations raised
Clinical care	120
Communication/Consent/Professional Relationships	40
Probity	12
Working with colleagues	6
Health	4
Conviction/Criminality	2
Racism/Discrimination	1
Other	0
Teaching/Supervision	0
Business/employment issues	0
Promoting anti-vaccination	0
Compliance with GCC investigations	0
Total	185

Clinical care allegations - by type and subtype

The most commonly occurring allegation relating to clinical care was the concern about treatment technique/approach/dissatisfied with treatment.

Type	Number of allegations raised
Substandard treatment	117
Inadequate record keeping	2
Poor hygiene practice	0
Clinic facilities/premises	0
Breach of patient confidentiality	1

Substandard treatment

This covers a wide variety of concerns raised, the most common examples being concerns about the treatment technique/approach or the patient was injured.

Subtype (Substandard treatment)	Number of allegations identified
Concern about treatment techniques/approach/dissatisfied with treatment	28
Inappropriate/contraindicated/excessive treatment/lack of clinical justification	24
Rough/aggressive treatment causing injury/pain	16
Misdiagnosis/No diagnosis	11
Failure to work within limits of knowledge, skills and competence	11
Failure to cease treatment	7
Failure to refer, when appropriate	5
Inadequate assessment/case history	5
Lack of further investigation/follow up/review	3
Lack of clinical justification for investigations/x-rays	3
Failure to adhere to x-ray guidelines	3
Failure to examine/inadequate examination	1

Communication/Consent/Professional Relationships by type and subtype

The second largest category of complaint is Communication/Sexual Boundaries and Consent.

Type	Number of allegations raised
Sexual boundaries	14
Communication	12
Consent	6
Intimidation of patient/pressure/undue influence to undergo treatment	3
Financial impropriety with patients	3
Failure to preserve patient's privacy and dignity/not providing chaperone	2
Failure/delays in providing access to records	0

Communication

Poor communication between patient and chiropractor or inappropriate language/comments forms an element of or reason for a referral.

Subtype (Communication)	Number of allegations raised
Rudeness to patient/lack of respect or sympathy/empathy	4
Inappropriate comments/language	3
Failure to explain or agree diagnosis/treatment or treatment plan/results	2
Failure to explain fees adequately/mechanisms for payment	1
Failure to explain refusal to treat	1
Bullying/Harassment/discrimination	1
Failure to respond to communication from complainant/comply with patient request	0
Failure to provide adequate information about complaints procedure/poor complaint handling	0

The most commonly occurring complaint received related to the chiropractor's rudeness to a patient / lack of respect or sympathy / empathy.

Sexual boundaries

There were 14 separate complaints alleging sexual behaviour by a chiropractor. This is a slight decrease from the previous year where there was 15.

Subtype (Sexual boundaries)	Number of allegations raised
Inappropriate contact with patient's body/intimate areas	5
Indecent/sexualised behaviour	4
Inappropriate personal/sexual relationship with patient	3
Use of sexualised language/comments	2

Probity

In this category, the largest number of allegations related to misleading advertising/claims made on website and false representation of skills/experience/registration/use of doctor title

Subtype (Probity)	Number of allegations raised
Misleading advertising/claims made on website	4
False representation of skills/experience/registration/use of doctor title	4
Financial deception/fraud/improper charging	3
Improper use of patient database/soliciting patients	1
Improper alteration of records/clinic diary	0
Practising while not registered/Practising on non-practising register/ Practising without indemnity insurance	0
Removal of patient records/data from clinic	0
Dishonesty/Failure to fulfil duty of candour to be open and honest with all patients	0

Commonly occurring allegations in 2024

The most commonly occurring allegations in 2024, in no particular order, were:

1. Concern about treatment techniques/approach/dissatisfied with treatment
2. Inappropriate/contraindicated/excessive treatment/lack of clinical justification
3. Rough or aggressive treatment causing injury or pain to the patient
4. Misdiagnosis/No diagnosis
5. Failure to work within limits of knowledge, skills and competence
6. Failure to cease treatment
7. Failure to refer, when appropriate
8. Inadequate assessment/case history
9. Sexual boundaries - inappropriate contact with patient's body/intimate areas

It is of note that whilst the most common occurring allegation may relate to clinical care, substandard treatment, if appropriate or clear communication between chiropractor and patient had taken place, this may have avoided this type of allegation being referred to the GCC.

There are more allegations relating to clinical care (1-8) and are the most commonly occurring in 2024.

Misdiagnosis (4) increased slightly in comparison to 2023.

Investigating Committee

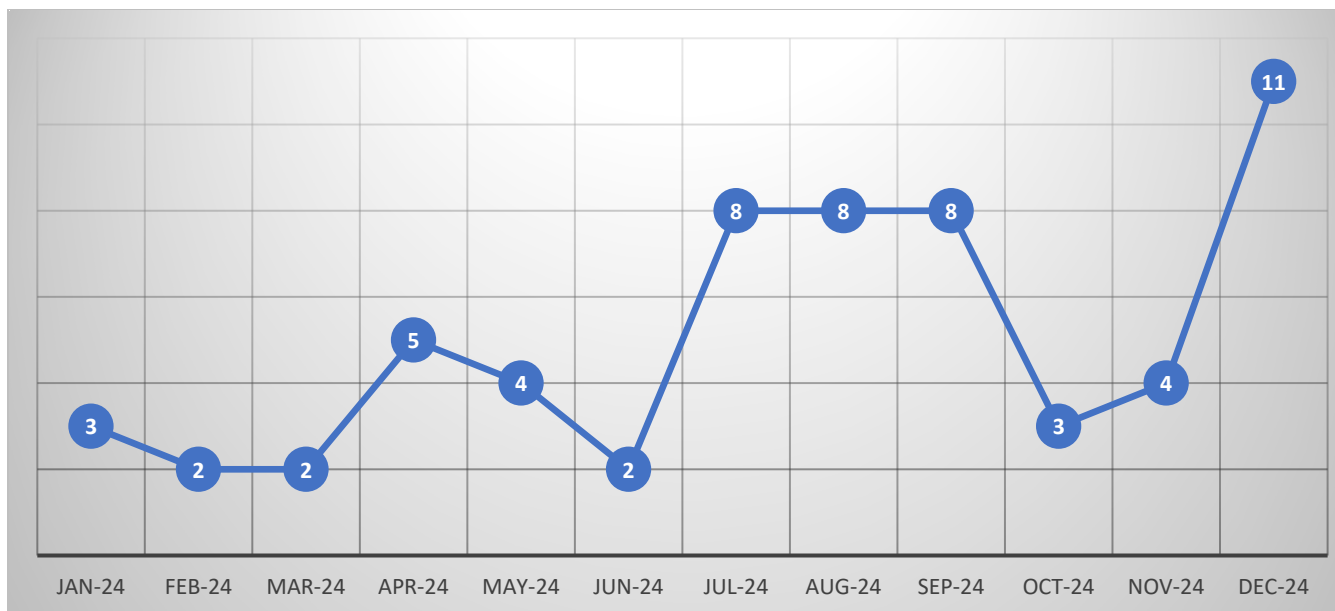
The GCC Investigating Committee (IC) investigates complaints made to the GCC about a chiropractor's conduct, professional incompetence or health, to establish whether there is a 'case to answer'. If there is a case to answer, the IC will refer the complaint for consideration by the GCC Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) or Health Committee (HC).

IC meetings are not held in public. The Committee sits with a Legal Assessor to advise them on points of law and procedure, but the Legal Assessor has no decision-making role.

In 2024, the IC determined 58 cases compared to 52 cases in 2023.

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Cases determined	58	52	60	82	87

Cases determined by month



Decisions of the Investigating Committee

Of the 58 cases that were determined by the IC in 2024, nine were referred on to the PCC (16%). Whilst there was a slight increase of cases determined by the IC, the proportion of referrals to the PCC remained nearly the same as 2023.

Decision of the IC	2024	%	2023	%	2022	%	2021	%	2020	%
No Case to Answer	49	84%	42	81%	48	80%	73	89%	78	90%
Referred to PCC	9	16%	10	19%	12	20%	9	11%	9	10%
Total	58		52		60		82		87	

Professional Conduct Committee

The Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) determines allegations about a chiropractor’s conduct or professional incompetence referred to it by the IC.

Allegations that have been referred to the PCC are considered at a public hearing. On rare occasions, parts of a hearing may be held in private.

The PCC members are both chiropractors and, non-chiropractic lay members. At each hearing there must be at least three PCC members present, including one chiropractor and one lay member. The panel is chaired by a lay member. The PCC sits with a Legal Assessor, advising the Committee on points of law and procedure, and who has no decision-making role.

If the PCC decides that the allegation against the chiropractor is not well founded, no further action will be taken. However, if the PCC decides that the allegation is well founded, it must impose a sanction.

Sanctions available to the PCC are:

- Admonishment
- Conditions of practice order
- Suspension
- Removal from the register

In 2024, 11 cases were determined by the PCC.

Five chiropractors were found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct in 2024. Details of the decision of each are set out below.

In six cases the chiropractor was found not guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

PCC decision	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Removal	1	1	1	2	0
Suspension	0	1	1	1	0
Conditions of Practice	1	2	0	0	0
Admonishment	3	1	3	2	2

No UPC	6	6	5	6	4
GCC offered no evidence	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	11	10	11	6

The median number of weeks taken from the receipt by the GCC of the initial complaint to the decision taken by the PCC was 123 weeks for decisions made in 2024.

Review hearings

Where a chiropractor has been either suspended or a conditions of practice order imposed at a previous hearing, a review hearing may be held to ensure the chiropractor is safe to return to the register.

There was one review hearing held in 2024, in comparison to three review hearings in 2023.

PCC Caseload

At the end of 2024 there were 8 cases that were yet to be determined by the PCC. This is a decrease of two cases compared to those at the end of 2023.

Health Committee

The Health Committee (HC) determines allegations of serious impairment of a chiropractor’s fitness to practise due to ill physical or mental health.

There were no cases referred to HC, and the HC did not meet in 2024.

PCC cases where the chiropractor was found guilty of Unacceptable Professional Conduct (UPC)

This section of the report is produced in accordance with the Chiropractors Act 1994, Section 22(14), which requires the Committee to publish a report setting out the names of those chiropractors in respect of whom it has investigated allegations and found the allegations to be well founded.

Name and registration number of Registrant	Date of Decision	Source of complaint	Outcome
Horace London 01494	29/02/2024	Patient/Relative of	Admonishment
<p>Summary of facts found proved and amounting to UPC</p> <p>The registrant failed to record Patient A’s case history, failed to adequately conduct / record the patient’s physical examinations, and did not develop or document a plan of care. The registrant also failed to obtain / record Patient A’s informed consent to treatment. The registrant performed a cervical spinal manipulation. The registrant adjusted Patient A’s clothing to expose her buttock without obtaining her consent and touched her buttock in the course of advising / correcting their posture. The registrant did not adequately or at all wear a surgical mask / a single use apron / glove. The registrant also failed to cooperate with the GCC in that he did not provide the GCC with a transcript of Patient A’s chiropractic records following one of more requests.</p>			
Robert Cooper 3873	23/07/2024	Chiropractic/Clinic where worked	Conditions of Practice
<p>Summary of facts found proved and amounting to UPC</p> <p>The registrant failed to maintain adequate patient records (record keeping and documentation involving a very large number of patients spanning from 2013 until around 2019). The registrant failed to communicate properly with other healthcare professionals or third parties and failed to refer patients to alternative practitioners when clinically indicated. The registrant failed to make or record diagnoses which were not supported by examination findings or presenting symptoms and in relation to one patient, provided treatment which may have been contraindicated.</p>			
Horace London 01494	20/09/2024	Organisation (e.g. Police/Chiro association)	Admonishment
<p>Summary of facts found proved and amounting to UPC</p> <p>The registrant failed to notify the GCC within the prescribed time period that he had been charged with two criminal offences on 28 February 2022 which was noted as misleading.</p>			

Name and registration number of Registrant	Date of Decision	Source of complaint	Outcome
Julia Gold 01698	11/12/2024	Self Declaration / Registrations	Admonishment
<p>Summary of facts found proved, material relevance of the criminal offence and amounting to UPC</p> <p>The registrant was convicted of the offence of driving a motor vehicle when the alcohol level was above limit. The registrant also failed to notify the GCC within the prescribed time period that she had been charged and convicted with a criminal offence.</p>			
Paul Allen 05039	18/12/2024	Patient/Relative of	Removal
<p>Summary of facts found proved and amounting to UPC</p> <p>The registrant did not make accurate records of Patient A’s non-chiropractic care and treatment and acted dishonestly in that he knowingly created inaccurate records of Patient A’s non-chiropractic care and treatment.</p>			

Interim Suspension hearings

Investigating Committee

If a complaint received raises an immediate concern for the protection of the public, the Investigating Committee (IC) will hold an ‘interim suspension’ hearing to consider whether it should suspend the registration of the chiropractor being investigated.

If the IC decides that it needs to suspend the registrant to protect the public, the order cannot last longer than two months and will be in place while the complaint is investigated. If granted, the Interim Suspension Order is effective immediately. The Committee has no power to revoke an order once it has been made.

There were five registrants who were the subject of interim suspension hearings by the Investigating Committee in 2024, an increase of one from the previous year.

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Interim Suspension Hearings held	5	4	7	9	3
Interim suspension ordered	1	0	2	1	0
Interim suspension not ordered	4	4	5	8	3

Professional Conduct Committee

If the PCC decides that a complaint that has been referred to it by the IC is so serious that the public might need immediate protection, it will hold an interim suspension hearing. If the PCC decides that it needs to impose an Interim Suspension Order to protect the public, the Order is effective immediately, and it lasts until the end of the PCC process.

There were no PCC interim suspension hearings held in 2024, the same as the previous year.

Section 32 complaints

Under Section 32 of the Chiropractors Act 1994, a person who (whether expressly or by implication) describes themselves as a chiropractor, chiropractic practitioner, chiropractitioner, chiropractic physician, or any other kind of chiropractor, is guilty of an offence unless they are a registered chiropractor.

Over the course of a year, several complaints are received relating to individuals that describe themselves as above where they are not a registered chiropractor.

Following review, the GCC can take several courses of action. These include:

- Issuing advice to result in changes to websites, publications and other relevant marketing materials
- Sending a ‘cease and desist’ letter
- Instructing inquiry agents to obtain more information
- Recommending that the case is closed.

Where letters have been sent, the GCC checks that appropriate action has been taken.

General Chiropractic Council [Fitness to Practise Annual Report 2024](#)

In cases where the breach or potential breach of section 32 is of very serious concern, the Registrar will consider whether to prosecute.

During 2024, 57 complaints were reviewed and closed in 2024, leaving 13 complaints open at the end of 2024.