

**OpenLearn animation**

*Witness to harm - What is Fitness to Practise for social care and social workers?*

**Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Speaker 3:**

SPEAKER 1: As a social care professional, I've heard about fitness to practise, but I want to know how it's relevant to me.

SPEAKER 2: Fitness to practise refers to the health, character, and competence of a professional to practise.

SPEAKER 3: As a social care professional, you will be a member with one of the social care regulators.

SPEAKER 2: They keep patients safe by ensuring professional standards are upheld and that their members are fit to practise.

SPEAKER 3: There are four social work and social care statutory regulators in the UK, they are-- Scottish Social Services Council, Social Work England, Social Care Wales, and Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

SPEAKER 2: There are also 9 health care regulators in the UK regulated by the Professional Standards Authority.

SPEAKER 1: What can regulators investigate?

SPEAKER 3: A range of concerns, from misconduct to lack of competence, to criminal convictions, and health conditions that might affect user safety.

SPEAKER 2: And many more.

SPEAKER 1: And what can't regulators investigate?

SPEAKER 2: Regulators will tell you what they cannot regulate on their websites.

SPEAKER 3: For instance, they can't deal with complaints about the level of service an organisation provides.

SPEAKER 2: They can't get involved in matters which should be decided by a court. And they can't provide legal advice.

SPEAKER 3: You'll find many more examples on their websites.

SPEAKER 1: What are my responsibilities regarding fitness to practise as a social care professional?

SPEAKER 2: To practise as a social care professional, it's a legal requirement that you register with them. Though each regulator is different, they all require that professionals promote professional standards and report concerns about other professionals or your own practice.

SPEAKER 3: This might include reporting harm, exploitation, inappropriate, unsafe, or discriminatory practices. It may include informing service users and families of their right to complain and providing them with relevant support.

SPEAKER 2: Plus cooperating with any investigations into your own fitness to practise.

SPEAKER 3: You can find out more on your regulator's website.

SPEAKER 1: OK. How do I, or a service user, raise a concern about their social care?

SPEAKER 2: You can do this yourself or support the service user or their family to do so.

SPEAKER 3: You can raise your concern through both your employer, and regulator's website, or telephone support line.

SPEAKER 1: What happens if I raise a concern?

SPEAKER 3: There will be an investigation by a regulator which can take a long time, even years.

SPEAKER 2: If the investigation finds sufficient evidence to proceed, there will be a fitness to practise hearing.

SPEAKER 3: The aim of the hearing is for the regulator to find out whether the professional fell seriously below the standards expected of them.

SPEAKER 2: You may need to provide a witness statement in writing or in person.

SPEAKER 3: The professional's lawyer or union representative will ask you about your witness statement, challenging your views on what happened.

SPEAKER 2: You may need to provide evidence, including records of care or what you observed.

SPEAKER 3: This can be hard work and even upsetting for service users who may feel they've been harmed. But it's vital people raise concerns to ensure safety and quality of care.

SPEAKER 2: If the case is proven, the professional may have limits put on their practice, or be taken off the register altogether, struck off, preventing them from practising again.

SPEAKER 3: Raising concerns and giving evidence in fitness to practise hearings helps to ensure the professional doesn't do the same thing again.

SPEAKER 2: This ensures all care users can trust their care professionals.