



**\* Joint Letter on behalf of Alan Ryan, Director of National Transformational Programmes, Health Education England and Richard Cattell, Deputy Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, NHS England and NHS Improvement \***

23 July 2020

Dear Colleague,

### **Re: Pharmacist Education and Training Reform**

Patients and other health professionals are becoming increasingly reliant on the clinical knowledge and skills of pharmacists. Clinical pharmacists are being deployed across Primary Care Networks, hospital pharmacists are now firmly part of multidisciplinary teams and practice in specialist areas including at consultant level, and community pharmacists are providing urgent care for low acuity conditions through the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service. Many more pharmacists are becoming prescribers.

These types of clinical services are largely replicated across the UK, and all require pharmacists to have additional training, in part because their initial education and training does not fully support these needs. This has been recognised by the pharmacy professional regulator, the General Pharmaceutical Council, who are shortly to finalise new regulatory standards for the five years of pharmacist initial education and training.

This reform is required to standardise the uptake of this additional training, providing future newly qualified pharmacists with the necessary consultation skills and confidence to provide the clinical services expected by patients and the NHS. This type of structured training, where workplace based clinical training is very significantly enhanced, will more easily link to post registration training in research and advanced practice.

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to be a huge challenge. The pharmacy profession across all sectors has responded remarkably. It has also brought with it the opportunity to innovate quickly to support patient needs.

The pandemic has also affected the training of the current cohort of pre-registration pharmacists, who have not had the full experience necessary for registration. The GPhC has decided to provisionally register this cohort, with the final assessment likely to take place later this year, with full registration to follow for those successful in the exam.

This situation provides an opportunity to accelerate the reform of pharmacist education. The first phase is to provide provisionally registered pharmacists with the foundation training support they need. Together with the duties of employers and supervising pharmacists, it will help mitigate any risks to patients. The NHS is therefore introducing a standard one-year foundation training for all provisionally

registered pharmacists providing NHS funded care and services in England from September 2020, that we are calling the **Interim Foundation Pharmacist Programme (IFPP)**. The aims of the programme are:

- To support provisionally registered pharmacists in England transition to full GPhC registration and beyond;
- To develop pharmacists' ability to achieve high quality outcomes for patients and improve patient safety; and
- To inform the next stage of pharmacist education and reform.

The next phase of pharmacist education and reform, subject to further consideration by a broad range of stakeholders, and led by the General Pharmaceutical Council, is to replace the current pre-registration year with a one-year foundation programme.

The programme will form the 5<sup>th</sup> year of a continuum of pharmacist initial education and training. The aim is to commence this approach from the Summer of 2021. Whilst this timetable is demanding, it will consolidate the profession's standing amongst the wider clinical workforce, be worthwhile for the care of patients, the needs of the NHS, and the careers of future pharmacists.

The UK Chief Pharmaceutical Officers' group is supportive of the direction of travel and this approach was agreed by the national Education Governance Oversight Board on 4 June 2020, with the proviso that implementation would need to take account of each country's circumstances and subject to appropriate consultation.

To summarise, the first phase of pharmacist education and reform is to build support around the current cohort of pre-registration pharmacists who will become provisionally registered pharmacists in August 2020. There will be further communications shortly setting out the details, together with FAQs and points of contact should you have further questions. The second phase will be to introduce reform in earnest. The intention is to both ensure the NHS has a sustainable supply of the well trained, clinically focussed pharmacists it needs, and to provide pharmacists with a rewarding career.

Thank you for your continued support.



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