

Pharmacy Technician and Pharmacy Support Staff Workforce Development Strategy

Document Control

Pharmacy Technician and Pharmacy Support Staff Workforce Development Strategy

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1. Executive summary

The NHS is facing a number of unprecedented and complex challenges, which not only impact on care delivery but on sustainability that relates to funding, advances in treatment and changes in patient diseases and preferences (Care Quality Commission, Public Health England and NHS Improvement, 2014). However, of growing concern is the availability of a workforce with the right skills to deliver the service now, while developing talent to deliver future service requirements.

Pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff working in patient-facing roles delivering better, safer and more cost-effective care will:

- reduce medicines wastage
- support and implement changes to improve patient and medication safety
- support medicines optimisation

This workforce development strategy follows on from [Advancing pharmacy education and training: a review](#) published by Health Education England in January 2019. The strategy focuses on pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff, in particular:

- Setting out the current pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce landscape, including key policy and strategic drivers influencing change in the workforce
- Describes the education and training required to meet these changes
- HEE priorities for the next 5 years to support the delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan and People Plan.

The strategy will underpin development of workstreams to define how these priorities will be delivered and implemented at a national and regional level and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The priorities of the strategy fit under five areas, these are to:

Understand the current workforce
Grow the workforce
Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development
Promote pharmacy as a career
Aseptic services

Key partners, stakeholders and user groups have contributed to this document, to ensure that the needs of the workforce and priorities affecting systems are clearly evidenced and articulated; see acknowledgements section 9.

1.1 Summary of priorities

1.1.1 Priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

Understand the current workforce

1. Establish workforce analytics and modelling strategies to understand the demographics, diversity, distribution and attrition of the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician, pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce.

Grow the workforce

2. Use the workforce analytics and modelling to determine what pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce is needed now and in the future in terms of numbers, work setting and distribution across sectors. This will help to inform the workforce pipeline and trainee numbers.
3. Undertake research to understand recruitment and retention in order to support activities that promote the retention of pharmacy technicians in the profession or wider healthcare system.
4. Ensure supply of pharmacy technicians meets demand and create additional training capacity by facilitating new training sites as part of cross-sector training.
5. Conduct an impact assessment to determine feasibility and risk of transitioning all HEE pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician commissioned places to cross sector training, to inform future implementation.
6. Support and inform the pharmacy funding reform programme to ensure that HEE funding to support the training of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians is equitable across England. Also, to ensure that workforce deployment models meet service needs (to avoid over or undersupply across regions).
7. Promote the pharmacy apprenticeship procurement framework to employers, to assure quality training.

Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development

8. Undertake an impact assessment of the current range of qualification and courses (used to meet the 2017 GPhC IET) on the pharmacy technician workforce. Work with the regulator to manage and mitigate risks.
9. Work with pharmacy employers to develop the current pharmacy technician workforce across all sectors to ensure they meet the 2017 GPhC IET.
10. Ensure that the apprenticeship provisions meet the needs of the healthcare system.

11. Redefine foundation practice for pharmacy technicians.
12. Undertake research to enable an evidence-based approach to workforce development, expansion and transformation, e.g. primary care roles
13. Support pharmacy support staff development into the pharmacy technician workforce.

1.1.2 Priorities for the next 3-5 years (2023/24 – 2025/26)

Grow the workforce

14. Maintain workforce intelligence monitoring strategy to understand the changing landscape of the pharmacy technician workforce and work with ICSs/STPs to develop workforce plans that meet service demands system wide.
15. Work towards a single HEE commissioning model for training of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians across all sectors in England that is quality managed by HEE.

Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development

16. Support the continued evolution of a relevant regulated education and development framework for pharmacy technicians that reflects workforce and patient need.

1.1.3 Promote pharmacy as a career priorities

Priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

17. Define the role of the pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff to demonstrate service contribution – aims being to increase uptake of the role in practice and promote the careers as attractive options.
18. Promote the role of pharmacy technicians across the wider healthcare system.
19. Promote the different routes of entry and develop a clear career pathway.
20. Undertake widening participation initiatives to ensure a diverse and inclusive pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce.

1.1.4 Aseptic services priorities

Priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

21. HEE to sit on NHSE/I implementation board (due to meet Feb/Mar 2021)
22. Complete a gap analysis of HEE development against the workforce recommendations in the Transforming Aseptic Services report.
23. Pilot and evaluate how the Science Manufacturing Technician (SMT) apprenticeship makes better use of the pharmacy Aseptic workforce, to understand progression into and progression from SMT.

2. Purpose

HEE exists for one reason only: to support the delivery of excellent healthcare and health improvement for patients and the public across England. The HEE pharmacy teams are working to ensure that the pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce of today and tomorrow has the right numbers of staff with the right skills, values and behaviours at the right time and in the right place to meet patient needs.

This pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce development strategy sets out the current pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce landscape, policies and strategic drivers influencing change in the workforce, the education and training required to meet these changes, and HEE priorities for the next 5 years to support the delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan and People Plan.

It sets out the national principles for developing the pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce. Workstreams will be established to define how these priorities will be delivered and implemented at a national and regional level and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The strategy describes five priority areas, these are to:

Understand the current workforce
Grow the workforce
Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development
Promote pharmacy as a career
Aseptic services

3. Introduction

3.1 Background

The pharmacy team consists of three main staff groups:

- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy Technicians
- Pharmacy Support Staff

‘Pharmacy professional’ is a term used to describe a pharmacist or registered pharmacy technician, both professions are regulated and registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). The GPhC is the independent regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises in Great Britain. The registers of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians provide protection for patients and the public by ensuring that only those qualified, competent and with a duty to maintaining high standards

can practice as registered pharmacy professionals in Great Britain. The registration of pharmacy technicians with the GPhC became mandatory on the 1st July 2011¹.

‘Pharmacy support staff’ refers to the non-registered workforce within the wider pharmacy team.

The Association of Pharmacy Technicians United Kingdom (APTUK) is the national professional leadership body for pharmacy technicians working in all pharmacy sectors across all countries in the UK. As pharmacy support staff are not a regulated profession, they do not have a professional leadership body.

3.1.1 Pharmacists

Pharmacists:

- use their expert knowledge of medicines and health to provide care to patients with all types of health conditions.
- supervise pharmacy technicians and pharmacy assistants and work as part of a multidisciplinary team advising health care professionals such as doctors and nurses on the best medicines and care.
- advise patients on minor ailments, help patients manage long-term conditions and screen medicines for safety, appropriateness, and clinical effectiveness.
- prescribe medication to patients after careful assessment. They are responsible for clinical decisions about them and how they manage their condition.
- Have completed an accredited Pharmacy degree (e.g. MPharm)
- Have completed and passed a registration assessment and associated pre-registration training.

3.1.2 Pharmacy technicians

Pharmacy technicians manage the supply of medicines and devices in a pharmacy and assist pharmacists with advisory services. A qualified pharmacy technician could be undertaking the following:

- providing safe and effective pharmacy services
- supply medicines and devices to patients, whether on prescription or over the counter
- medicines optimisation
- manage areas of medicines supply such as dispensaries
- supervise other pharmacy staff / training and development
- pre-packing, assembling and labelling medicines
- manufacturing
- aseptic dispensing
- quality control
- procurement
- information technology

¹ The Pharmacy Order 2010. Available from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/978111487358>

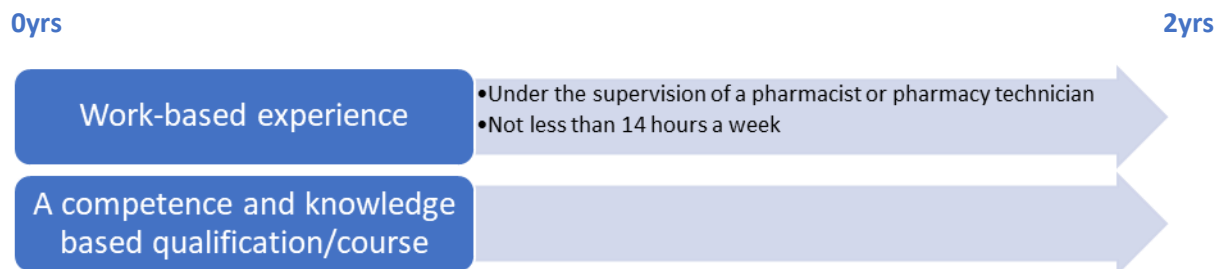
- clinical trials
- medicines information

Pharmacy technician education, training and development is fundamental to underpin the transformation and up-skilling of a growing pharmacy technician workforce. This is beginning to enable appropriate skill mix to support the required infrastructure changes, new and extended roles, and also enhance the role of pharmacist clinicians and services across the sectors.

In October 2017 GPhC published new standards for the initial education and training² of pharmacy technicians, against which they approve education and training for pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians. To support the education and training of pharmacy technicians to meet the new standards, HEE commissioned Skills for Health to facilitate the collaborative development of an integrated competency and knowledge-based qualification. From 2020, the standards were embedded into a new integrated qualification/courses to ensure that newly registered pharmacy technicians are competent to practice safely and effectively.

Registration as a pharmacy technician now requires the completion of a GPhC approved integrated competency and knowledge-based qualification or course. This requires two consecutive years of work-based experience under the direction of a registered pharmacist or pharmacy technician.

The new Pharmacy Technician initial education and training requirements from February 2020.



3.1.3 Pharmacy support

The majority of pharmacy support staff work across the secondary care or community pharmacy sector within roles such as pharmacy assistants, dispensing assistants, medicine counter assistants and health champions. As pharmacy services change to meet patient and public needs, there are new and innovative roles appearing in different sectors and the boundaries between different pharmacy support staff roles are becoming more fluid. For example, the assessment of a patient’s own medicines and some diagnostic testing.

Pharmacy support staff work under the supervision of a pharmacy professional and undertake roles in:

- the dispensing and supply of medicines or medical devices

² GPhC Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians:
https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/standards_for_the_initial_education_and_training_of_pharmacy_technicians_october_2017.pdf

- advising on the use of medicines and medical devices
- assisting pharmacy professionals to provide pharmacy services to individuals
- assisting in the preparation of medicines
- over the counter sales of non-prescription medicines as counter assistants
- providing proactive healthy living advice as health champions

The GPhC set requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff to ensure they have the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours to provide safe and effective care and to ensure patient safety³. To meet the requirements, pharmacy support staff must complete one of the following:

- a nationally recognised pharmacy services qualification at minimum Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) Level 2
- a GPhC accredited course covering the required learning outcomes at a level equivalent to RQF Level 2
- in England, an apprenticeship for pharmacy support staff that includes either of the above

Pharmacy support staff must be enrolled on a training course as soon as practically possible and within three months of commencing their role. Pharmacy support staff must complete courses at a pace, which is compatible with safe practice, and normally within three years.

3.2 The current pharmacy workforce

Year	No. of Pharm Techs on register in England	Year on Year change (headcount)	Year on Year change (%)
2016/2017	19,437	249	1%
2017/2018	19,480	43	0%
2018/2019	19,454	-26	0%
2019/2020	19,736	282	1%
2020/2021	20,372	636	3%

At the time of writing, there are 20,372 pharmacy technicians in England on the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) register⁴ (Source GPhC). Total growth in the profession has been 6.2% (1,184) over the last 5 years, an average 1.2% (237) yearly growth. One third of registrants (n=8015) are employed by the secondary care sector.

³ GPhC Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff:

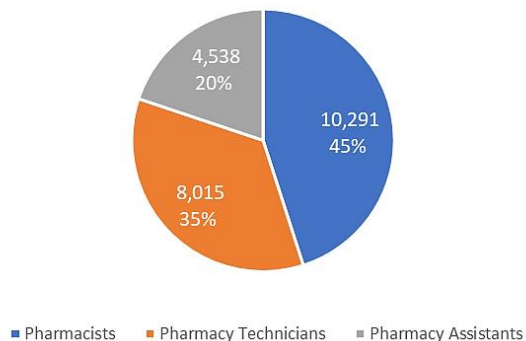
https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/document/gphcrequirements-for-the-education-and-training-of-pharmacy-support-staff-effective-october-2020_0.pdf

Data from the electronic staff record (ESR) (March 2020) suggests that in the secondary care sector the pharmacy workforce is made up of

- 35% pharmacy technicians
- 20% pharmacy support staff (pharmacy assistants)

The remaining undertake roles within community pharmacy and more recently as part of Primary Care Networks (PCNs).

Pharmacy workforce* in the acute sector as at March 2020 (FTE)



In 2017, pharmacy support staff accounted for close to half of the community pharmacy workforce in England.⁵ The NHS Workforce Statistics⁶ showed a smaller but still significant proportion of the hospital pharmacy workforce is made up of support staff - around 4,000 staff from a total workforce of 21,500, representing almost 20% of the hospital pharmacy workforce in England.

We know that Pharmacy support staff are an essential pipeline to the pharmacy technician workforce in the secondary care sector. Electronic Staff Record (ESR) data shows that on average 50% of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician vacancies are filled by pharmacy support staff, demonstrating career pathway and support progression.

The GPhC have some data on the diversity of the pharmacy technician workforce and no data on pharmacy support staff workforce. ESR can also inform us on the diversity of the pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce in the secondary care sector, but this is limited and not representative of the whole workforce. We recognise the importance of expanding, collating, analysing and presenting such data, to improve system understanding and the ability to respond to potential inequalities.

4. Drivers

The NHS is facing a number of unprecedented and complex challenges, which not only impact on care delivery but on sustainability that relates to funding, advances in treatment and changes in patient diseases and preferences (Care Quality Commission, Public Health England and NHS Improvement,

⁵ [The Community Pharmacy Workforce in England 2017](#), HEE (2018:13-14) (accessed December 2018)

⁶ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/october-2018>

2014). However, of growing concern is the availability of a workforce with the right skills to deliver the service now, while developing talent to deliver future service requirements.

Pharmacy roles have an integral function in:

- reducing medicines wastage
- supporting and implementing changes to improve patient and medication safety
- supporting medicines optimisation
- reducing NHS pressures to reduce length of stay in hospital and provide patient care closer to home

Key policies that are driving change in the demand for pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff include:

- NHS Long Term Plan⁷
- We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 action for all⁸
- Medicines Value Programme⁹

4.1 Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service (DES)

In January 2019, NHS England and the British Medical Association's General Practitioners Committee agreed a five-year GP (General Medical Services) contract framework from 2019/20. The new contract framework marked contract changes essential to delivering the ambitions set out in the NHS Long Term Plan. This included the criteria and eligibility for GP practices to sign up to the new Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service (DES) for 2019/20. GP practices as part of the Network Contract received funding for additional clinical pharmacists.

In April 2020, pharmacy technicians were included as an additional profession to support the delivery of the network DES. This would result in pharmacy technicians moving into these roles from other sectors (Community and Secondary Care) potentially destabilising them. For 2020/21 and 2021/22 only, in recognition of workforce supply constraints, the default expectation was that PCNs would not recruit more than one additional individual pharmacy technician under the Scheme, or two in those PCNs with a population of over 100,000 patients. To ensure the NHS was not destabilised the ambition was to have up to two pharmacy technicians per PCN, that would have seen up to 2500 pharmacy technicians working in General Practice in England by 2025. This cap was lifted in January 2021, the impact of this change is unclear.

⁷ NHS Long Term Plan: <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

⁸ We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 action for all : https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/We_Are_The_NHS_Action_For_All_Of_Us_FINAL_24_08_20.pdf

⁹ Medicines Value Programme: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/medicines-2/value-programme/>

4.2 Rebalancing Medicines Legislation and Pharmacy Regulation Programme Board

The Rebalancing Medicines Legislation and Pharmacy Regulation Programme Board reviews relevant pharmacy legislation and regulation to ensure it:

- provides safety for users of pharmacy services;
- reduces any unnecessary legislation;
- allows innovation and development of pharmacy practice.

The Board advises ministers on the development of policy. It will also oversee policy delivery to help ensure that the Rebalancing Medicines Legislation and Pharmacy Regulation Programme meets its objectives. There are potential changes to regulation, proposed changes will modify the supervision requirement for medicines supply, this will impact greatly on the role of pharmacy technicians creating additional demand on both training requirements for advanced skills and knowledge, and workforce numbers.

4.3 Mental Health Pharmacy

A Review of Innovative and Extended Roles within Mental Health Pharmacy¹⁰ published May 2020 states the upskilling of pharmacy technicians and senior assistant technical officers (SATO) is required to release pharmacists from inpatient activity and for pharmacy technicians to provide community-based services, for example, clozapine clinics or medicine administration activities.

4.4 Diversity and Inclusion

We have aligned this workforce development strategy to HEE's overarching Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Framework 2018-20¹¹. We recognise the critical importance of diversity and inclusion to our workforce and are determined to be ambitious. The framework exists as a tool to help Health Education England remain focused on what matters and better understand what it can, and should, do to support the diversity and inclusion agenda; whilst it delivers upon its prime purpose of ensuring that the healthcare system has the right staff, with the right skills, values and behaviours. By aligning our workforce development strategy to HEE's Diversity and Inclusion Framework, we are committed to ensuring the best possible experiences and outcomes for patients, service users and the public in England.

Through this strategy we will continue to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce. We will also work in partnership to address inequality in experience and opportunity faced by people from some groups

¹⁰ A Review of Innovative and Extended Roles within Mental Health Pharmacy:

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Pharmacy%20Extended%20Roles%20Report.pdf>

¹¹ Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Framework 2018-20:

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20-%20Our%20Strategic%20Framework.pdf>

and communities. By building a diverse and inclusive workforce, we will be better able to help tackle health inequalities and improve outcomes for all patients and the diverse communities we serve.

4.5 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are critical in attracting people into the NHS and supporting widening participation, to develop a workforce which is representative of the community it serves. As emphasised in the Interim NHS People Plan, new recruits including underrepresented groups and existing staff can be developed to gain new skills and qualifications whilst working and supporting better career progression within the NHS. Apprenticeships enable healthcare providers to use the funds they contribute into the Apprenticeship Levy to train staff and provide opportunities for the NHS to strengthen relationships with local education providers to ensure high-quality, value for money, education provision, relevant to local system requirements and are also important for social mobility and retention.

However, the reform of apprenticeships and funding in England has left uncertainty around the process to access the new levy and utilise apprenticeships as a significant route to develop the workforce. Challenges for the employer are not being able to use the apprenticeship levy to cover backfill or apprentice salary costs. In addition, pressure to utilise underspent levy funds locally is detracting from the strategic use of apprenticeships to meet local workforce challenges; organisations are instead focusing on quick wins. We need to support small community pharmacy organisations to know about levy transfers and use them.

4.6 HEE National Education Funding Reform Programme

Health Education England (HEE) have recently established a National Education Funding Reform Programme. This draws together funding strategy, policy and commissioning functions to support education-funding decisions, locally and nationally, to be well informed, evidence-led and reflect the future staffing needs of the NHS. The programme will:

- Introduce consistency between financial processes across England.
- Develop national education funding policy, appreciative of service need, which maximises the impact of public investment.

A review of pharmacy technician funding is due to take place within the programme workstreams, in full consultation with stakeholders. This review will consider funding models being proposed in other professions that are switching to an apprenticeship model, for example, nursing apprenticeships. There is no agreed date for the review.

5. Pharmacy technician priorities

5.1 Rationale

Demand is growing for pharmacy technicians to be available to support delivery of new service models. Current workforce intelligence suggests that the projected substantive staffing increase for pharmacy technicians is not predicted to meet the total projected demand (trend) for substantive and temporary staffing across the acute and primary care sectors, estimated in a 9% vacancy rate by

2025, based on 2500 additional PTs required in PCN, if no interventions are made. There is insufficient data to project demand for community pharmacy and other sectors.

A better understanding of the current workforce will allow HEE to ensure that no groups are disadvantaged as they enter the profession or during their development.

The majority of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians are trained in one sector: either in secondary care or community pharmacy. Within both sectors training capacity is stretched. Within the secondary care employers utilise their apprenticeship levy to fund education and training provisions and, in some regions, also receive a contribution towards education and training infrastructure. As many of the smaller community pharmacies, do not have levy funds, they will either self-fund the education and training or request a levy transfer or reserved funding from the government if they are aware of this option. Community pharmacy employers also have no access contributions towards education and training infrastructure. To exacerbate this, new workforce demands are emerging in care homes, primary care and mental health, particularly in light of COVID-19. Historically, these sectors have not contributed to creating the supply pipeline. This is for several reasons, including some of the practical barriers required to meet the GPhC IET standards. It is not sustainable in the long term for new sector demand to continue to rely on the workforce supply from secondary care and community pharmacy services.

5.1.1 Pharmacy technician priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

Understand the current workforce

1. Establish workforce analytics and modelling strategies to understand the demographics, diversity, distribution and attrition of the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician, pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce.

Grow the workforce

2. Use the workforce analytics and modelling to determine what pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce is needed now and in the future in terms of numbers, work setting and distribution across sectors. This will help to inform the workforce pipeline and trainee numbers.
3. Undertake research to understand recruitment and retention in order to support activities that promote the retention of pharmacy technicians in the profession or wider healthcare system.
4. Ensure supply of pharmacy technicians meets demand and create additional training capacity by facilitating new training sites as part of cross-sector training.
5. Conduct an impact assessment to determine feasibility and risk of transitioning all HEE pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician commissioned places to cross sector training, to inform future implementation.

6. Support and inform the pharmacy funding reform programme to ensure that HEE funding to support the training of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians is equitable across England. Also, to ensure that workforce deployment models meet service needs (to avoid over or undersupply across regions).
7. Promote the pharmacy apprenticeship procurement framework to employers, to assure quality training.

Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development

8. Undertake an impact assessment of the current range of qualification and courses (used to meet the 2017 GPhC IET) on the pharmacy technician workforce. Work with the regulator to manage and mitigate risks.
9. Work with pharmacy employers to develop the current pharmacy technician workforce across all sectors to ensure they meet the 2017 GPhC IET.
10. Ensure that the apprenticeship provisions meet the needs of the healthcare system.
11. Redefine foundation practice for pharmacy technicians.
12. Undertake research to enable an evidence-based approach to workforce development, expansion and transformation, e.g. primary care roles
13. Support pharmacy support staff development into the pharmacy technician workforce.

5.2 HEE response to support priorities so far

5.2.1 Understand the current workforce

Currently we use both ESR data and the Community Pharmacy Workforce Survey to gain intelligence on the workforce, this data along with data obtain from the GPhC has been used to determine workforce supply. HEE are working with key stakeholders across the pharmacy sector to better understand the distribution, spread and education needs of the workforce.

5.2.2 Grow the workforce

Building on evidence and successes of small pockets of cross-sector training in 2019/20, HEE funded 48 pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians to take part in a 24-month cross-sector training pilot, which aimed to:

1. Increase the pipeline by investing in the infrastructure to grow training capacity across different sectors of practice.

2. Develop a flexible workforce that can work as part of a multidisciplinary team across all care settings.

The learning from the pilot to date was used to inform the implementation of a £4m investment in pharmacy technician workforce development in 2020/21. Some of the funding was transferred to regions to support a small increase in the secondary care sector trainee numbers from unmet demand, with the remainder being used to fund a second cohort of cross-sector training.

Not all regions had previously used the apprenticeship route to train pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians. Alongside the £4m investment the Pharmacy Programme Group (PPG) made a strategic decision (December 2019) to use the Apprenticeship route for funding **all** education provision, whilst existing training contribution arrangements remain unchanged from 20/21 on the following basis:

1. ensures minimal disruption to the workforce pipeline whilst responding to drivers identified through the NHS Long Term Plan, Interim NHS People Plan, HEE education funding reform programme and local/system needs
2. enables a fully supported, proactive transition towards the apprenticeship training route
3. supports strengthening engagement with local system around workforce planning and maximising the opportunities presented by the apprenticeship levy, including levy transfers to small community pharmacies
4. relevant experience to contribute to evidence-based decisions about apprenticeships as part of the wider education funding review

To assist employers that have limited experience of using apprenticeships HEE supported the development of a national pharmacy apprenticeship procurement framework in 2020, led and managed by Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust. Employers may choose to procure apprenticeship provision directly or utilise the framework. Utilisation of the procurement framework provides assurance that the apprenticeship training meets both HEE and employer defined quality markers, in addition to the regulatory standards.

Transition to the apprenticeship route enabled some regions to re-purpose the education and training funds released, to further increase the number of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians.

Overall increase in funded pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician places funded by HEE

Region	No. of PTPT places funded 2018/19	No. of PTPT places funded 2019/20	No. of PTPTs places funded 2020/21
North	132	135	217
Midlands	42	42	66
East of England	33	33	19
South West	54	71	120
South East	25	25	49
London	66	77	120

Kent, Surrey & Sussex	28	40	44
National	0	41	0
TOTAL	380	464	635

5.2.3 Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development

Initial Education Training

Removal of the aseptics competency element from the IET for pharmacy technicians has resulted in a workforce gap within aseptics as pharmacy technicians focus on patient facing roles. A potential new workforce to fill the gap that has been identified is detailed in section 8, which examines the recent report: Transforming NHS Pharmacy Aseptic Services in England¹².

Foundation pharmacy technicians (Years 1 to 2)

In 2019/20 HEE co-commissioned research with APTUK to analyse the role of a foundation pharmacy technician across different healthcare settings in order to inform the education and training needs at this level of practice. 'Foundation' is defined as post-registration training and development; years 1-2. APTUK plan to use the findings of the report to inform the development of a National Competency Framework for Foundation Pharmacy Technicians. HEE intends to use the Framework to collaborate with providers to develop the curriculum to support the development of roles post registration. It will also inform the needs of the existing workforce and areas of practice that need upskilling. The report includes an Attributes Framework of competencies required for Foundation Pharmacy Technicians with nine attributes and indicators:

- Person-Centred Care
- Professional Accountability
- Quality and Safety
- Problem Solving and Informed Decision Making
- Collaborative Working
- Effective Communication
- Proactive Personal Development
- Big Picture Thinking
- Adaptable Working

While this is a key piece of work to be used to the education and training needs of foundation pharmacy technicians we recognise that the implementation of the 2017 GPhC IET will change the needs as has the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Primary Care

In 2019/20 HEE supported APTUK to develop a Competency Framework for Primary Care Pharmacy Technicians to define the level of practice to support the evolving role of pharmacy technicians working in PCNs as part of the DES. To support development against the Framework HEE has commissioned a pilot and evaluation of 59 pharmacy technicians on the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education's

¹² Transforming NHS Pharmacy Aseptic Services in England:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/931195/aseptic-pharmacy.pdf

(CPPE’s) Primary Care Education Pathway (PCPEP). Learning from the pilot will be share with key stakeholders.

We will continue to work with the APTUK to identify education and training needs of the pharmacy technician workforce.

Covid-19

Key learning during the Covid-19 pandemic to date has highlighted a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician register would have supported workforce management. We will continue to work with key stakeholders to better understand the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician workforce across all sectors and identify opportunities to capture this information and learn from it.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak in England, system responses have centered around ensuring workforce capacity to support and treat patients, maximising survivorship, and keeping staff safe. Emergency Legislation known as the Coronavirus Act 2020, was introduced by the government and has since seen and seen the rapid upskilling of healthcare professionals to work in unprecedented circumstances, or in clinical areas outside of their usual practice, whilst remaining within the boundaries of their occupational competence. Ensuring there is sufficient pharmacy workforce capacity and skill mix across our systems is critical to the Covid-19 recovery effort and this learning from peak response efforts is key to enabling new approaches to workforce challenges. The pharmacy technician skill set provides real opportunities to build the capacity of the healthcare workforce to deliver services to patients and local populations that various health providers serve. An example of this is utilisation of current skills in supporting vaccination centres, such as supply, safe handling and vaccine preparation.

5.3 Pharmacy technician priorities for the next 3-5 years (2023/24 – 2025/26)

Grow the workforce

1. Maintain workforce intelligence monitoring strategy to understand the changing landscape of the pharmacy technician workforce and work with ICSs/STPs to develop workforce plans that meet service demands system wide.
2. Work towards a single HEE commissioning model for training of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians across all sectors in England that is quality managed by HEE.

Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development

3. Support the continued evolution of a relevant regulated education and development framework for pharmacy technicians that reflects workforce and patient need.

6. Pharmacy support staff priorities

6.1 Rationale

Traditionally as pharmacy support staff fall in the AfC band 1 to 4 and are not a registered profession they have not been prioritised. Also, currently we do not have the resources to support priorities for the pharmacy support staff, it is therefore essential that we understand the workforce better, scope their needs and explore how we might be able to support this.

6.2 Pharmacy support staff priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

<p>Understand the current workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish workforce analytics and modelling strategies to understand the demographics, diversity, distribution and attrition of the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician, pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce.
<p>Grow the workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Use the workforce analytics and modelling to determine what pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce is needed now and in the future in terms of numbers, work setting and distribution across sectors. This will help to inform the workforce pipeline and trainee numbers. 3. Promote the pharmacy apprenticeship procurement framework to employers, to ensure quality training.
<p>Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Ensure that the apprenticeship provisions meet the needs of the NHS. 5. Support pharmacy support staff development into the pharmacy technician workforce.

6.3 HEE response to support priorities so far

6.3.1 Understand the current workforce

Currently we use both ESR data and the Community Pharmacy Workforce Survey to gain intelligence on the workforce, this data has been used to determine workforce supply, but this is limited. We recognise the importance of collating and analysing this information to give a better understanding of the current workforce and to also identify and address potential inequalities.

6.3.2 Grow the workforce

To increase access to education and training for pharmacy support staff within the secondary care sector the Level 2 Pharmacy Apprenticeship in the ‘Pharmacy Apprenticeship Procurement Framework’ set up by Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust.

6.3.3 Ensure the right education and training to support workforce development

Each region provides different education and training to support the development of pharmacy support staff, we recognise this causes inequalities to access and will be reviewed as part of the education funding reform programme.

6.4 Pharmacy support staff priorities for the next 3-5 years (2023/24 – 2025/26)

The outcome of the business case will determine what the pharmacy support staff priorities are for the next 3-5 years, as this is determine on the resources to support the priorities.

7. Promote pharmacy as a career priorities

7.1 Rationale

To support the pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff pipelines we must continue to promote pharmacy as a career. By increasing the promoting of the roles and delivering high-quality education and training we will attract more people making the pharmacy technician a desirable career option.

7.2 Promote pharmacy as a career priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

Priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

1. Define the role of the pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff to demonstrate service contribution – aims being to increase uptake of the role in practice and promote the careers as attractive options.
2. Promote the role of pharmacy technicians across the wider healthcare system.
3. Promote the different routes of entry and develop a clear career pathway.
4. Undertake widening participation initiatives to ensure a diverse and inclusive pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff workforce.

7.3 HEE response to support priorities so far

In 2020, HEE included pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff in their ‘career of a pharmacist’ campaign to increase awareness of the role and support recruitment into vacancies. Ensuring the

trainees have the right attitude and behaviours required of the profession and NHS. And that trainees are representative of the population which they serve, including diverse backgrounds and communities.

8. Aseptic services

8.1 Rationale

NHS Pharmacy aseptic services provide sterile controlled environments for the preparation of injectable medicines into Ready to Administer (RtA) formats for patients. Products include chemotherapy, injectable nutrition and clinical trials for new medicines. This has the potential to shorten a patient's length of stay in a hospital, release nursing time for care, improve patient safety and support more patient care closer to home. Pharmacy aseptic services make antibiotics, chemotherapy and intravenous feed.

A report was commissioned by the Minister of State for Health to provide advice to the government and NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I), to regional, system, and trust pharmacy leads, as well as independent sector aseptic pharmacy providers. The final report was published October 2020. The Transforming NHS Pharmacy Aseptic Services in England Report¹³ makes two workforce recommendations.

- HEE with Specialist Pharmacy Service, NHS production and NHS QA/QC to create policy and structure to support training and development of aseptic workforce.
- Review new roles, skill mix and routes to entry.

Training the workforce for pharmacy Aseptic services (including aseptic dispensing and preparation, production, radiopharmacy and quality assurance and control) has traditionally been provided using the IET for pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff or via local in-house training programmes. The 2017 IET for pharmacy technicians increasingly emphasises patient-facing competencies and references minimal knowledge of Aseptic services as part of attaining the qualification. This potentially reduces both exposure to Aseptic services during IET and attractiveness of this specialist area for pharmacy technicians. Employers therefore face significant challenges developing and growing a specialist workforce in pharmacy Aseptic services.

8.2 Aseptic services priorities for 2021/2022

Priorities for the next 1-2 years (2021/22 – 2022/23)

1. HEE to sit on NHSE/I implementation board (due to meet Feb/Mar 2021)
2. Complete a gap analysis of HEE development against the workforce recommendations in the Transforming Aseptic Services report.

¹³ Transforming NHS Pharmacy Aseptic Services in England:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/931195/aseptic-pharmacy.pdf

3. Pilot and evaluate how the Science Manufacturing Technician (SMT) apprenticeship makes better use of the pharmacy Aseptic workforce, to understand progression into and progression from SMT.

8.3 HEE response to support priorities so far

HEE Talent for Care funded the development of an Ofqual regulated qualification bespoke to NHS pharmacy Aseptic services - 'Level 3 Diploma in the Principles of Aseptic Pharmaceuticals Processing' - for use in the Science Manufacturing Technician (SMT) apprenticeship pathway to enable creation of a new workforce, utilise funding through the apprenticeship levy and utilisation by licensed and un-licensed NHS aseptic and production facilities. HEE are piloting the apprenticeship, with provision of enhanced funding support and centralised evaluation, this will enable fast and focussed exploration of suitability and allow rapid, widespread sharing of learning to stakeholders to increase confidence and uptake if appropriate.

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