

Supporting the COVID-19 response:

Guidance for Pre-registration Trainee Pharmacist and Pre-registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician

The Statutory Education Bodies (SEB) for England¹, Scotland² and Wales³ are aware of the multiple concerns over the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pharmacy education and training, alongside the broader impact on clinical care.

We wish to emphasise the importance of following current guidance and advice from Public Health England, Health Protection Scotland, Public Health Wales and Public Health Agency:

Public Health England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

Health Protection Scotland:

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>

Public Health Wales:

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

This statement provides guidance to NHS Trusts, Health Boards, primary care and community employers on trainee related issues; and will be updated as required throughout the COVID-19 period. We recognise employers will also continue to update local plans for managing the pandemic during a highly challenging period over the coming months.

The information in this statement should be read in conjunction with the requirements and guidance from the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). Throughout the coming weeks, there will be ongoing dialogue between the NHS and the GPhC to ensure timely communication and guidance is issued and shared.

Pre-registration Trainees: Pharmacist and Pharmacy Technicians

As the outbreak intensifies, the SEBs recognise there may be circumstances when trainees may be required to offer assistance or support outside of their scheduled training pathways and contracted duties. Trainees may also be temporarily re-directed to duties where they have already demonstrated competency to help with service provision.

In these circumstances it is essential that systems are in place to support trainees and protect patients. Trainee wellbeing must be protected and processes in place to ensure they are not exposed to risks through their work or training.

It is anticipated there will be changes for some trainees in their programmes or rotations and this should take place through a clear process, with priority given to safeguarding patient care and the health of trainees. GPhC guidance should be followed by all current trainees and the movement of

¹ Health Education England

² NHS Education Scotland

³ Health Education and Improvement Wales

trainees should not compromise the aim for trainees to complete the training within the expected time frame, where appropriate.

Where there are changes in the activities or duties of trainees, priority must be given to:

- appropriate supervision in the host environment. If they are deployed into clinical areas outside of their training pathway they must have appropriate induction and senior workplace guidance on who they are reporting or being supervised by, with their contact details.
- allocating activities or duties which align with the individuals' competence. Trainees must not be asked to undertake any activity beyond their level of competence.
- trainee health and wellbeing
- the circumstances being under constant review.

Guidance on COVID-19 in pregnancy is provided by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG). In order to ensure the most up to date guidance is followed the link is provided here: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/coronavirus-covid-19-infection-in-pregnancy-v3-20-03-18.pdf>

In particular, the RCOG website states that, *“Pregnant women who can work from home should do so. If you can’t work from home, if you work in a public-facing role that can be modified appropriately to minimise your exposure, this should be considered and discussed with your occupational health team.”*

As pregnant trainees cannot see patients face to face, it is recommended efforts are made to support home working subject to Occupational Health assessment, safety of the home environment and provision of safe and secure technology.

Impact on the registration process

We are mindful of the impact that a delay in the registration of current pre-registration pharmacist trainees and pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians will have on the ongoing capacity of the pharmacy workforce throughout the pandemic.

In regard to pre-registration pharmacist trainees, employers will be aware that the current period is a crucial point in the pre-registration timeline for trainees to demonstrate they have met the GPhC pre-registration standards, including submission of documentation. Employers should ensure plans are in place to mitigate risks in meeting key timelines where appropriate to do so. They should refer to GPhC guidance on managing circumstances where trainees are absent or training interrupted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Within our remit and as the circumstances allow, we are reviewing the situation and processes to minimise the impact on future cohorts, including 2020/21 cohorts and the recruitment of the 2021/22 cohort of pre-registration pharmacist trainees.

Further updates will be shared as the situation develops.