

Chapter 6 Executive Summary - The need to define the responsibilities and accountabilities of pharmacy technicians

With the notable exception of the circa 6% of pharmacy technicians working in primary care, UK pharmacy technicians can be delineated broadly into two significant sectoral groups; those working in hospital and those working in community pharmacy. The differences between these two groups are significant (see Appendix B) and have been hitherto ignored during the development of regulatory and healthcare policy. Whilst those working in hospital pharmacy (the minority) have enjoyed a development framework for several decades, those in the community setting (the majority) have suffered from long term underinvestment in training, remuneration and the absence of a structured career framework. For these reasons among others, community pharmacy technicians are not yet ready to take on additional clinical roles because patient safety could not be guaranteed under the existing regulatory and professional frameworks.

There are isolated examples of pharmacy technicians working in specialist roles, particularly in the hospital sector, but this is not widespread and must not be taken as representative of the normal training or capabilities of pharmacy technicians.

This report calls for pharmacy policy makers to clearly define roles and responsibilities and identify clear lines of accountability for both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, through discussions involving coalface practitioners, in order to help foster a symbiotic and complementary skill mix model which works optimally for the public, makes working practices more efficient, extends the practical capability of the pharmacy team and improves patient safety.

There is also a need for a consensus, reached through a wide-ranging and inclusive debate within the profession and among pharmacy technicians, on exposure to regulatory accountability and criminal sanction for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.