

30 June 2023

Open Letter to Pharmacy Professionals

NHS Long Term Workforce Plan

The [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#) (LTWP), published today, sets out the next phase in the growth and development of the NHS workforce as a whole, including the important role of pharmacy professionals across all settings.

The plan is great news for all of us - pharmacy professionals, patients, local communities and the NHS.

Over the last 10 years, rapid developments and increased complexity in medicines, data and technology, coupled with demand in the NHS for clinical, patient-facing practitioners, have brought about a positive evolution in the role of NHS pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. Along with our central role in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this has enabled a shift in perception of the clinical care people can expect to receive from a pharmacy professional in all parts of the NHS.

The NHS LTWP sets out how we can build on these changes, addressing the changing needs of patients over the next 15 years, by closing the current workforce shortfall through funding for increased education and training places and a comprehensive retention strategy.

Specifically the plan commits to:

- Expand training places for pharmacists by 29% to around 4,300 by 2028/29. This will put us on the path to increasing training places by around half overall to almost 5,000 by 2031/32.
- Grow the number of pharmacy technicians in future years.

Crucially the plan covers all pharmacy teams – including the workforce employed by the NHS and primary care and community pharmacy contractors delivering funded services in the NHS.

The plan sets out how we will make an NHS pharmacy career more attractive, majoring on embedding the right culture for all employees and improving retention with a particular focus on inclusive leadership following the Messenger review. Specifically, it highlights the ongoing



work to reform training for the benefit of students, trainees, higher education institutions and providers.

The ambitious programme of pharmacy workforce transformation outlined in the NHS LTWP is designed to support the NHS's strategy for effective medicines use, reduction in health inequalities and excellence in patient care through multi-professional team working. It will help integrated care boards (ICBs), NHS trusts and primary care and community pharmacy employers to achieve their goals and continue to support all pharmacy teams to do what they do best; lead and contribute to the safe delivery of high-quality, clinical care for patients and local communities.

Clearly the development of independent prescribing as part of initial education and training is a gamechanger for pharmacists, patients and the NHS, with approximately 2,800 newly registered pharmacist independent prescribers due to join the workforce every year from September 2026. This will be transformational for all pharmacy teams, creating improved access and quality of care for patients and, importantly, a more flexible workforce with skills that are equally applicable in all pharmacy settings, enabling multi-professional clinical teams to work in new ways.

This includes, for the first time, nationally coordinated, quality assured and funded posts for all foundation trainee pharmacists, as well as expanded clinical training and placement opportunities throughout the five years, so there is consistency across all sectors of practice.

Currently NHS England is building opportunities for community pharmacists to use new independent prescribing skills as part of integrated primary care teams. It is establishing community pharmacy independent prescribing pathfinders in every ICB to inform a future commissioning framework.

Strategies for increasing access to prescribing supervision and creating a culture where existing pharmacist independent prescribers train to become Designated Prescribing Practitioners (DPP) and Designated Supervisors as part of their career development are being implemented. This includes the procurement of 500 training places for DPP supervision skills development in 2023, ensuring the NHS is ready to support and mentor the new workforce of independent prescribers from 2026.

As is the case with many healthcare professions, the scope of practice for pharmacy technicians is also being broadened to make the most effective use of their skills, training and potential as registered, multi-professional healthcare team members. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is due to launch a public consultation on legislative changes



which would allow pharmacy technicians to make use of Patient Group Directions – enabling them to legally supply prescription medicines, where appropriate. Developing the role of pharmacy technicians would also enable pharmacists to move further into a mainstream independent prescribing role.

To improve access to healthcare and the career satisfaction of current community pharmacists, NHS England is also introducing independent prescribing and broader clinical skills development for community pharmacists through the investment from the Pharmacy Integration Programme; and investing in training the current community pharmacy technician workforce to enable them to take on more responsibility for clinical services and in managing dispensing activity.

To deliver on this, it is vital that all employers continue the collaborative work to develop pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

The Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Team at NHS England will continue to work closely with pharmacy system leaders and our partners across all parts of the NHS and national stakeholder organisations to achieve that.

Thank you for your contributions to NHS patient care.

Best regards



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