Pharmacy Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme: Opportunities 2024/25

This briefing has been provided to inform local decision making around the opportunities for using the Direct Patient Care (DPC) category to support the training and retention of pharmacy staff, as part of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) and NHSE Long Term Workforce Plan.

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) will need to agree how best to use the pharmacy workforce recognising other professions and local workforce opportunities. This briefing is intended to advise health system colleagues on the new opportunities available and provides information on:

- Additional roles and role requirements,
- Training and supervision requirements and availability
- The ARRS funding route

The addition and contribution of existing Band 5 Pharmacy Technicians and Band 7/8a Clinical Pharmacists as part of the primary care workforce has been widely reported on. Currently there are 2,292 Pharmacy Technicians (Band 5) and 7,581 Clinical Pharmacists (Band 7/8a) working in primary care via the ARRS. Primary care workforce quarterly update December 2023

Since the publication of the GP Contract NHS England and DES letter opportunities to utilise the ARRS funding for additional pharmacy workforce to complement the existing ARRS roles have been broadened.

In addition to the current named pharmacy roles eligible to access ARRS funding, the following groups of pharmacy staff are also now eligible for access to ARRS funding, through the Direct Patient Care (DPC) category with the support of the local PCN and ICB.

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These roles will be accessible via the ‘Direct Patient Contact (DPC)’ option.

To support workforce pipeline and retention of existing pharmacy staff, the DPC option provides an opportunity to grow the pharmacy workforce and provide some suggested retention opportunities for existing staff to build their responsibilities by supporting education supervision and DPP capacity within PCNs and across the sectors of ICSs.

This information is subject to additional Agenda for Change banding role requirements but provides some examples to support wider capacity expansion as part of primary care workforce plans.

There is also the additional option of utilising the https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/shared-workforce-model-for-pharmacists/ to consider how these additional opportunities can support across healthcare sectors, such as community pharmacy.

Pharmacy Technician Apprentices

Pharmacy Technicians complement the work of Clinical Pharmacists, through utilisation of their technical skillset. Their deployment within primary care settings allows the application of their acquired pharmaceutical knowledge in tasks such as medicines reconciliation, audits, prescription management support, and where appropriate, advising patients and other members of the PCN workforce. (NHS England » Expanding our workforce)

Pharmacy Technicians (Band 5) have been part of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) since 2021 and at present 2,292 FTE pharmacy technicians are directly employed under the scheme (Primary care workforce quarterly update December 2023)

PCNs can now use the **'Direct Patient Contact'** funding to recruit a Pharmacy Technician Apprentice to support future PCN workforce requirements, with support from their Integrated Care Boards.

The introduction of Pharmacy Technicians into the ARRS has resulted in registered Pharmacy Technicians (Band 5) being recruited from existing parts of the healthcare system with both community pharmacy and hospital pharmacy settings seeing experienced Pharmacy Technicians leave to work in PCNs. This has led to an overall decrease in posts of registered Pharmacy Technicians in community pharmacy and hospitals settings, at a time when the role in all sectors is expanding, and demand is increasing.

There are funding and apprenticeship routes available for training Pre- Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technicians (PTPTs) in the NHS hospital sector and proposals being explored in community pharmacy. However, this has not been the case historically in PCNs. As such, to continue to grow the number of Pharmacy Technicians training and working in primary care we are proposing the inclusion of PTPTs (Apprentice Pharmacy Technicians) in the already established ARRS funded general practice workforce apprenticeship models that are currently available to trainee nursing associates and trainee physicians' associates. This will support a sustainable pipeline and aid growth in an area that historically has primarily recruited registered Pharmacy Technicians from other sectors.

PTPTs (Apprentice Pharmacy Technicians) undertake a two-year work based GPhC Approved training programme which satisfies the 2017 Initial Education and Training Standards. The underpinning curriculum includes chemistry, microbiology, physiology, action and uses of medicines,

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law, pharmaceutics, dispensing, pharmacy production, professional practice, ethical decision making, medicines optimisation and accuracy checking.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (June 2023) commits to reaching 16% of training through healthcare apprenticeship routes by 2028/29 and it is recommended that employers in primary care are supported to maximise use of the apprenticeship levy to support the funding of education costs for PTPTs in this area.

Accessing apprenticeship funding:

For employers that are a 'levy payer' 100% of course fees will be funded by the levy. If you are classed as a 'non-levy payer' you will pay 5% of the course fees, and the remaining 95% will be paid by the government. Non levy payers can access 100% of course fees through Levy Transfer. A Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account will need to be set up to reserve these funds.

Your regional NHS England Workforce, Training and Education (WT&E) pharmacy team can provide further advice if required, including signposting for guidance on provision of levy-transfer. Further information regarding the apprenticeship levy can be found on the HASO website.

Eligibility

Pharmacy Technician apprentices must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- To be eligible for government funding at least 20% of an apprentice's normal working hours, over the planned duration of the apprenticeship practical period must be spent on off-the-job training.
- If the apprentice works less than 30 hours per week, they are part time, and your provider must extend the duration.
- Enrolment onto a GPhC Recognised Qualification / GPhC Accredited Course. https://assets.pharmacyregulation.org/files/document/standards_for_the_initial_education_and_training_of_pharmacy_technicians_october_2017_1.pdf
- The entry requirements will vary depending on the apprenticeship provider; however, this is usually the equivalent of four GCSEs at Grade 4 and above (formerly C and above), including mathematics, English language, science and one other subject.
- a minimum of two years relevant work-based experience in the UK under the supervision, direction, or guidance of a Pharmacist or Pharmacy Technician to whom the applicant was directly accountable for no less than 14 hours per week.
- The apprentice must have access to a dispensary environment where they are appropriately supervised to undertake activities relating to the assembly of prescribed items and the accuracy check of dispensed medicines and products.
- Be 16 years of age or older (there is no maximum age limit)
- Progress reviews must take place at least 4 times per year. These must be carried out at least every 12 weeks. Progress reviews can be virtual.
- The apprentice must be employed under a contract and be able to complete the apprenticeship within the time they have available, including the end-point assessment. Visa and fixed term contracts must not expire before duration of apprenticeship.
- Only an apprenticeship at a higher level than a qualification they already hold is permitted, unless materially different from any prior qualification. Your preferred apprenticeship provider will provide guidance regarding former qualifications.

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It is strongly advised that employers negotiate with apprenticeship providers to ensure that the final accuracy checking of items dispensed by others is included within the apprenticeship programme. This is not automatically included by all providers.

Pharmacy Technician Educational Supervisor Role

PCNs with the support of their ICBs can use the **'Direct Patient Contact'** funding option to ***support*** an increase in the sessional employment of ARRS pharmacy technicians to build supervisory capacity and provide a career pathway to support retention of existing band 5 Pharmacy Technicians and supervise PTPTs (Apprentice Pharmacy Technicians) to support future PCN workforce requirements.

To ensure that PTPTs (Apprentice Pharmacy Technicians) have access to educational supervision in PCNs, it is proposed that access to ARRS funding be made available to support the incorporation of formalised educational supervision sessions within Primary Care Pharmacy Technician roles.

There is currently no career framework beyond Agenda for Change band 5 to support retention of ARRS Pharmacy Technicians working in PCN roles and the introduction of a formalised supervision role would support retention, along with allowing practices to further build the supervision capacity whole workforce.

Pharmacy Technicians can access NHS England funded Educational Supervisor training and will be required to provide supervision of apprentices to enable them to fulfil regulatory requirements to support registration. They will be required to have completed a DES recognised Primary Care Pathway education and have a minimum of 12 months experience in their current role.

Clinical Pharmacist Designated Supervisor and Designated Prescribing Practitioner Role

PCNs with support from their ICBs can use **the 'Direct Patient Contact'** funding option to support ***an increase in the sessional employment of ARRS Clinical Pharmacists to build supervisory and increase multiprofessional DPP capacity*** to reflect the supervision of trainees and provide a career pathway to support retention of existing band 7/8a Clinical Pharmacists.

Designated Supervisors (DS) support foundation trainee pharmacists during the final year of the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists. Designated Supervisors must be pharmacists. They provide Education Supervision and undertake assessment of the foundation trainee pharmacist during the foundation training year. They must meet the GPhC requirements (for the 2024/25 training year) or GPhC-delegated NHS England requirements (from the 2025/26 training year) requirements. This includes having been registered as a pharmacist for at least 3 years.

From the 2025/26 foundation training year, general practice can be the employer of a foundation trainee pharmacist. Where a general practice employs a trainee pharmacist, there must be a Designated Supervisor in place for the trainee pharmacist. There are also opportunities for a general practice to host a foundation trainee pharmacist on a rotation from another training site. Where rotations are 13 weeks or longer, there is a requirement that the rotational training site provides a Designated Supervisor to support the trainee pharmacist.

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Designated Prescribing Practitioners (DPPs) provide Education Supervision and assessment of prescribing capabilities for:

(1) Registered Pharmacists and other registered professionals undertaking a post-registration independent prescribing course at a university.

(2) Foundation trainee pharmacists (from the 2025/26 foundation training year, when independent prescribing will be embedded in the initial training of Pharmacists)

For independent prescribing training – both in post-registration university courses and in the foundation training year from 2025/26 – there is a requirement that the prescriber in training completes a 90-hour period of learning in practice specifically related to prescribing, which the DPP oversees. During this time, the DPP must also support practice-based assessments to inform decision making relating to prescribing capability.

DPPs must be independent prescribers. For post-registration courses, universities commonly require DPPs to meet the criteria set out in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society DPP Competency Framework. More information can also be found here.

DPPs supervising Foundation Trainee Pharmacists in the 2025/26 foundation training year onwards will need to meet the requirements in the NHS England person specification. Therefore, there is an immediate need to support registered Pharmacists to train as independent prescribers through university courses. For community Pharmacists, it can be difficult to find someone to be their DPP.

In the 2025/26 foundation training year, there is also a need to support access to DPPs through cross-sector rotations and collaboration between the sectors of practice.

Being able to access funding through ARRS to resource these supervision roles provides a new opportunity for general practice and PCNs to support the supervision of Pharmacists and other healthcare professionals training as independent prescribers through post-registration university courses, and foundation trainees from 2025/26.

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