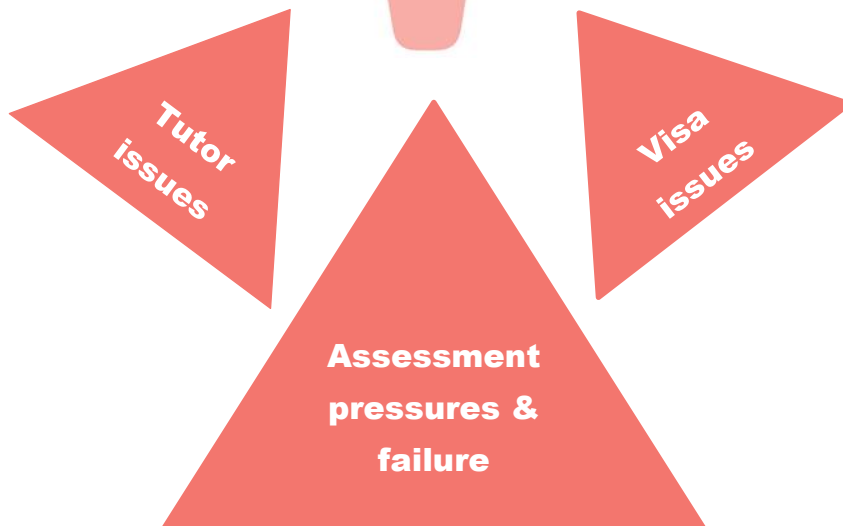
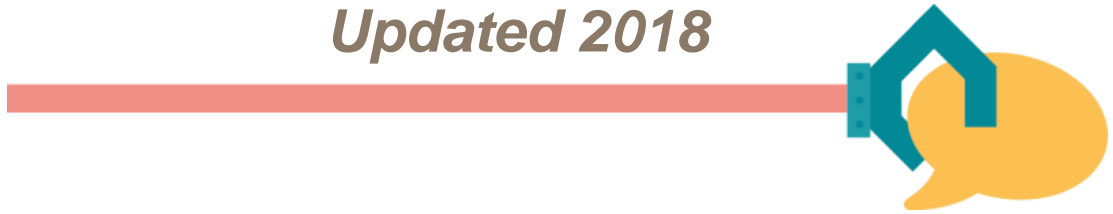


Pre-registration trainees report

Updated 2018



Pharmacist Support

working for pharmacists & their families

About Pharmacist Support

Pharmacist Support is an independent charity providing a range of free and confidential services to those eligible to use the charity's services. These are as follows:-

- a pharmacist who is on the GPhC register or who has been on the GPhC register or the former RPSGB register
- someone who is considered to be financially dependent on one of the above
- a pre-registration trainee
- a student on an MPharm course in Great Britain.

Our support includes an information and enquiry service, financial help to those in financial difficulty, a range of wellbeing services including workshops and our Listening Friends helpline, addiction support, careers coaching, specialist advice in debt, benefits, housing, immigration and employment matters.

Established by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) in 1841, The Benevolent Fund (as it was then known) was governed by the RPSGB Council. In 2006, an independent Board of Trustees was recruited to govern the organisation. Following extensive market research involving pharmacists from all sectors of the profession, the fund was relaunched two years later, with a new name to reflect the development and variety of its service provision.

Since the 2008 relaunch, requests for support have increased year on year. The profile of our service users has moved significantly, away from widows/widowers of pharmacists and those retired from the profession to pharmacists of working age, trainees and students.

Support provided by Pharmacist Support to pre-registration trainees

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1. Introduction

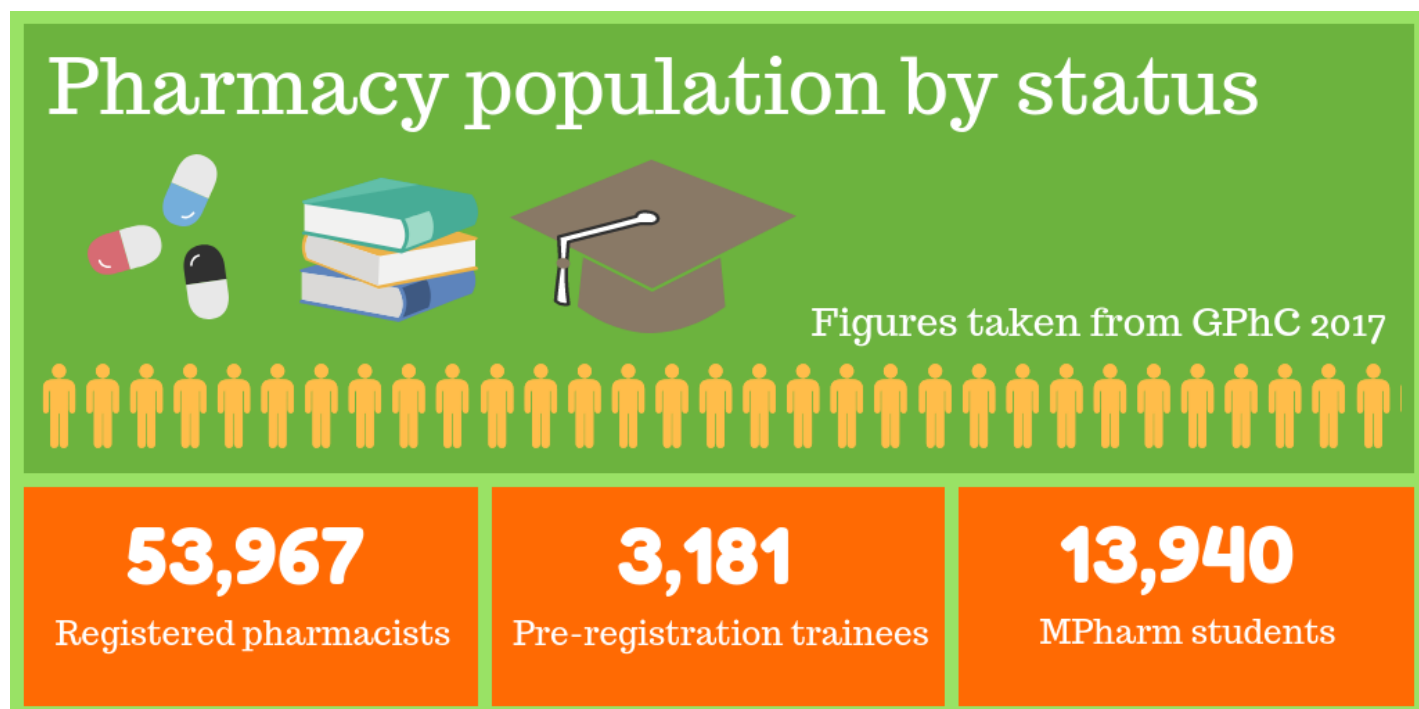
Our first report on Pharmacist Support's services to pre-registration trainees was published in July 2016 and was written following analysis of Pharmacist Support's service provision from 2009 to 2015. This analysis showed that a consistently high percentage of people assisted by the charity are pre-registration trainees. It also showed that a noticeably higher proportion of trainees approach us for help compared to pharmacists and MPharm students.

The original report looked at support provided to pre-registration trainees up to the end of 2015. This report provides an update taking into account service provision for 2016 and 2017.

Some developments have taken place since our first report was published, such as the introduction of the Oriel system for allocation of pre-registration placements. We have also started to note the impact of the change to the immigration rules relating to visa requirements for overseas students wishing to undertake pre-registration training in Great Britain. The report looks at how these changes are reflected in requests to the charity as well as which other issues are still prevalent.

In terms of overall numbers of students, pharmacists and pre-registration trainees in Great Britain, trainees are by far the smallest of these groups numerically.

Using the most recently available figures from the GPhC for pharmacists on the register (53,967 as of 31 March 2017), MPharm students (13,940 in the 2016-17 academic year) and trainees (3,181 from July 2017), the percentage of our service users who are pre-registration trainees is striking. Looking at our enquiry service, nearly 10% of trainees contacted us in 2016 and around 14% in 2017. In percentage terms, this would be the equivalent of about 5,000 – 7,500 pharmacists making an enquiry per year, compared to the actual 536 in 2016 and 701 in 2017 who did make an enquiry.



2. Numbers of pre-registration trainee service users



Total numbers of approaches to Pharmacist Support's enquiries service from all groups have been steadily increasing year on year with an increase of 318% between 2010 (347) and 2017 (1451). Of these, over the past three years, figures for the percentage of enquirers who were pre-registration trainees have remained consistent at 30% in 2015 (239 enquiries), 29% in 2016 (291 enquiries) and 29% in 2017 (421 enquiries).

Referrals of pre-registration trainees for specialist advice have comprised a similar annual percentage of around 30% for the past three years. Employment issues are always by far the most common reason for trainee referrals (60% in 2017) with 30% for immigration, 15% for benefit advice and a small number for help with debt.

In terms of financial assistance, the percentage of all recipients who were pre-registration trainees increased from 17% in 2013, to 25% in 2014 and 28% in 2015. 2016 saw a drop overall in the numbers of recipients of financial assistance and of these trainees made up 14% of the total. However, the percentage of recipients who were trainees in 2017 was back up to 23%.

Of all new callers to Listening Friends, the charity's support helpline, pre-registration trainees have made up between 22% and 27% of callers over the past three years.

3. Purpose of report

This more detailed look at assistance requested by and the help we provided to a particular user group informs the Charity's strategic and financial planning.

The charity considers that the findings in this report will be of relevance to other organisations with a role in relation to pre-registration training. We hope our information will be helpful in providing an indication of questions and concerns raised with us, prompting consideration of potential steps that other organisations can take towards resolving the issues highlighted. It is hoped that ultimately an improvement will be brought about in the experiences of trainees across the board, wherever they undertake their training.

4. Other organisations

GPhC

In its role as the regulator of pre-registration training, the GPhC has been taking steps to improve understanding of the key trends, issues and themes in pre-registration training. It engaged in a three year project from 2012/13 to

survey trainees and tutors to inform how it develops its approach to the future education and training of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. Work is underway on the development of new initial education and training standards for pharmacists. There is also now a separate process for raising a concern about pharmacy education and training. Analysis of pre-registration trainee pharmacist dissatisfaction showed that there were significant differences between satisfied and dissatisfied trainees based on age, ethnic group, training sector and region.

The GPhC's two part-time Pre-registration Training Facilitators deal with enquiries from individual trainees and Pharmacist Support often signposts to them.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS)

The RPS offers associate membership to pre-registration trainees. This allows access to networks and discussion groups, resources and tools, support on a range of professional issues and revision tools. It is also engaged in work to ensure and lead on the quality of training for trainees.

British Pharmaceutical Students' Association (BPSA)

The BPSA is the official student organisation of the RPS and it represents the interests of students and pre-registration trainees. Support for trainees includes two conferences per year, guidance for those entering training and a pre-registration magazine. There is a graduate officer who represents the views of trainees to external organisations and who can answer questions and provide support.

Pharmacists' Defence Association (PDA)

The PDA offers all trainees free membership of the PDA and the PDA Union. PDA membership includes professional indemnity and legal defence costs insurance and access to solicitors and experienced pharmacist advisers. PDA Union membership includes legal and employment expert advisers and trade union accredited pharmacist representatives to support in employment disputes. In our discussions with the

PDA, the issues brought to them have commonality with the issues noted by Pharmacist Support in this report.

Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE)

CPPE provides a range of learning programmes to help trainees prepare for the assessment and work on their portfolio for registration. Peer support is also provided through the CPPE Facebook page.

Oriel system

Health Education England (HEE) now operates a national recruitment scheme for all hospital pre-registration placements and many other training providers who can opt in to the system, through the online application portal Oriel. This was introduced for the 2018-19 intake. Applicants can express a preference for sector or specify programmes for which they are not willing to accept an offer and offers will be made for all programmes at the same time.

As noted in our previous report, the difference in timing of recruitment for hospital training places compared to community places has been a source of stress for trainees. Some community pre-registration placements are filled very early on, for example, 12 months before the training programme start date, whereas hospital placement offers are made at a later stage. Trainees may apply for placements in both sectors in order to maximise the offer of a placement, accept the offer of a community place, but then be offered a hospital place which they would rather accept. This has resulted in cases of trainees stating that employers have threatened to report them to the GPhC if they withdraw from an agreement they have made.

HEE is also engaged in reviewing the current model of education and training for the pharmacy workforce, to establish what training structures and funding models will best support a pharmacy workforce able to meet future patient need.

Pharmacist Support

Pharmacist Support is the only organisation providing a full range of pastoral support to trainees, however, trainees may well also have discussed concerns relating to their training with some of these other bodies.

Others

A number of other organisations are also involved in the provision of help and/or services for pre-registration trainees. These include:-

The National Pharmacy Association

Training is available for both trainees and tutors. The programme for trainees is delivered through monthly face-to-face study days and a selection of online resources including webinars. The programme is structured around the GPhC assessment syllabus and performance standards.

The course for tutors is available either as a face to face course or via e-learning and is suitable both for new and experienced tutors.

Buttercups

Buttercups offers training packages for trainees which include study days, online materials and webinars.

ProPharmace

ProPharmace is a training provider for pre-registration trainees. Training includes face-to-face training days and a full-length mock assessment.

Prereg Training Company

The Prereg training company provides off site study days and learning materials including workbooks.

Team Pre-Reg

Team Pre-Reg provides training and revision materials, resources and events to help trainees to prepare for the registration assessment.

5. What support does the Charity provide to trainees

Services

Enquiries from pre-registration trainees are mostly related to specific pre-registration issues (they accounted for 75% of enquiries from trainees in 2016 and 94% in 2017) during the initial placement or an additional six month placement or following a failed attempt at the assessment. Some of these also involve financial difficulty. The key issues for 2016 and 2017 were again failing the registration assessment (25%/27%) and problems with a tutor (25%/20%). Of the enquiries relating to failing the registration assessment, third time fails accounted for the largest group in 2016 (47%) reflecting the very low pass rate for the autumn 2016 registration assessment of 40.76%. Second time fails were the largest group in 2017 (up from 24% to 36%). First time fails remained broadly the same (29% in 2016 and 31% in 2017).

Enquiries relating to visa issues for pre-registration training made up 14% of all pre-reg enquiries and further information on these issues can be found in this report.

Pharmacist Support provides employment advice regarding possible breach of contract issues and employment law issues, such as leave entitlement, changes to terms and conditions, pay, bullying and harassment and discrimination. Where the situation causes the trainee stress, distress and/or anxiety, a Listening Friend can support them through this difficult period.

Where help is required with financial problems, we provide benefits entitlement advice, debt advice as well as direct financial assistance in the form of a grant. The vast majority of financial help provided is for living costs, with help also being given for the cost of the pre-registration assessment fee, revision aids, including RPS membership and the GPhC registration fee where applicable.

In the autumn of 2016 the charity introduced a pilot specialist immigration advice service. The aim of this pilot was to trial the provision of level

1 immigration advice focused on students, trainees and in some cases newly qualified pharmacists to enable them to find or complete a pre-registration placement and/or work in Great Britain following qualification. This followed the ending of the Pharmacy Professional Sponsorship Scheme run by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. This scheme enabled students already on an MPharm before April 2012 when the immigration rules changed to be granted a tier 5 visa to complete their pre-registration training in Great Britain.

A key area of our work is to signpost enquirers to appropriate organisations/sources. We do regularly signpost to the GPhC Pre-registration training facilitators who have been of significant help both to us, in clarifying/providing information and to trainees experiencing issues.

Sector of service users

The majority of trainees who contacted Pharmacist Support were, as previously stated, undertaking their placement in community pharmacy. Analysis of our calls suggests that the quality of preregistration training across the community sector varies greatly, particularly in its compliance with good employment practice and/or employment legislation.

In terms of pass rates by sector for first attempt at the registration assessment, in the June and

September 2016 and June 2017 sittings, hospital trainees had a higher percentage pass rate than community sector trainees:-

Date	Hospital	Community
June 2016	99.15%	94.94%
September 2016	65.91%	45.29%
June 2017	94.2%	76.1%

Figures from GPhC council papers

6. Issues

While we have continued to receive enquiries on a number of common topics, we have also noted some new areas of enquiry. These include the new Oriel system, visa issues and introduction by some employers of additional financial requirements. Below we give further information on these three areas, before moving on to note continued issues.

Oriel

For those who choose to use the Oriel system alone when applying for a placement, the issue with difference in timing between hospital and community placement offers is no longer applicable. However, we noted that some candidates chose to apply for placements in the conventional manner alongside submitting an application via ORIEL. Some students reported to us that some community employers were



offering placements as early as May or June 2017 for placements beginning in summer 2018. Oriel placements were not offered until November 2017 with final offers made and allocations concluded in December 2017. This timing creates a dilemma for students who wish to secure a placement well in advance and may accept an early offer from an employer outside of the Oriel system but who may then receive a more desirable offer through Oriel. We have advised trainees on the legal situation if they then decide to accept the Oriel placement. We have also advised trainees who have been told by a potential employer that they will report them to the GPhC if they withdraw from an agreement they have made.

Visa issues

When the immigration rules were changed by the government in 2012, closing the Tier 1 Post Study Work visa, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society set up the Pharmacy Professional Sponsorship (PPS) scheme. This scheme enabled overseas students already in the education system when the law changed to receive a Certificate of Sponsorship. This allowed them to apply for a Tier 5 visa to complete their pre-registration year in Great Britain, sit the registration assessment and, as long as they passed the assessment, go on to register with the GPhC.

The RPS scheme was closed to new applicants in November 2016. Therefore, overseas students who started their degree after April 2012 no longer have access to the RPS scheme.

Prospective trainees must now apply for a tier 2 *new entrant* visa or tier 5 visa (under either the *government authorised exchange* or *youth mobility* scheme) in order to be able to move into pre-registration training. Specific requirements, including sponsorship and/or appropriate salary levels are attached to these routes and the type of visa can also determine whether the applicant can apply from within the UK or not, and also whether they can remain in the UK at the end of their training.

Tier 2

A community pharmacy can pay a trainee more (or less) than the pre-registration grant but must

pay the appropriate salary required to meet the terms of the tier 2 visa. The appropriate salary level for a tier 2 visa for pre-registration training is higher than the pre-registration grant paid to community pharmacies for a trainee (although it is lower than that paid to NHS hospital trainees). An area of enquiry from trainees in this situation relates to situations where a community pharmacy employer has offered the post at this higher appropriate salary but then asks the trainee to pay back the difference and/or to pay for other costs, such as the employer's solicitors' fees.

The tier 2 visa requires payment of an appropriate salary for a specified number of working hours per week. An area of enquiry to the charity relates to contracts of employment that may meet the appropriate salary but require the trainee to work more than the minimum hours for that salary, which invalidates the visa.

We receive a number of approaches each year from trainees seeking to change their training provider, usually due to what they consider to be irresolvable issues with their tutor and/or training. As a tier 2 visa is given for a specific post, this leaves the trainee in the situation of needing to find an alternative provider and post that meets all the visa requirements and then re-applying for the visa.

Tier 5

Some international students are eligible to apply for a tier 5 visa for their pre-registration year. There is not the same minimum salary requirement, however, the trainee is required to return to their home country when the visa expires. There may therefore be a reluctance on the part of some students to apply for this visa. As a newly-qualified pharmacist they would have to apply for a new working visa from outside the UK and a cap is in place for the number of tier 2 visas that can be issued from outside the UK. There is no cap for tier 2 visas for applications made in the UK.

Failing the registration assessment

Further problems arise should a trainee not pass the registration assessment. Their visa is given for a specific post and for a limited period. Once

the visa runs out, they are no longer permitted to stay in the UK. They can consider applying for a different visa, for example, a visitor's visa to allow them to stay longer, but this is fixed term, does not allow them to work, cannot be extended and is not always granted. This can leave the trainee in the situation of having paid overseas student fees to complete a four year MPharm, completed pre-registration training, but not being able to resit the assessment and go on to register with the GPhC as a pharmacist.

Should the trainee need to complete a further period of work, they must then not only find paid work and secure a visa but also secure work that meets the terms of the visa.

Advice needs

It is expected, when applying to undertake an MPharm at a GB university, that applicants would ensure they are fully informed about visa requirements and options in order to stay in the UK to complete their pre-registration year, including being aware of potential issues should they fail the registration assessment. In practice, trainees are likely to end up seeking help at the point at which they encounter a problem. One of their key needs at this stage is basic immigration advice. Access to free immigration advice can be difficult to find, particularly in some locations and where provision may exist, it can take a while to access, which may be difficult for trainees with varying time limits and deadlines with which they must comply.

Assistance with these issues has been provided to Mpharm graduates seeking to undertake pre-registration training through level 1 immigration advice.

Deposits and financial penalties

We have had reports of additional financial penalties being imposed on trainees, for example:-

- requests for payment of deposits that are to be refunded once trainees have commenced their placement and completed a certain amount of training

- contracts with clauses imposing financial penalties should the trainee leave before the end of the 52 week placement
- clauses that prevent a trainee from working anywhere else as a trainee during the 52 week placement period.

Failing the registration assessment

Failing the registration assessment made up a further quarter of enquiries relating to pre-registration. Failing the third attempt accounted for nearly half of these (47% up from 12% in 2015, possibly reflecting the very low pass rate for the autumn 2016 registration assessment). Failing the second attempt accounted for 24%, down from 59% in 2015 and failing the first attempt remained the same at 29%. The impact and consequences of assessment failure are set out in the previous report and are included in full in the Appendix.

Some new or developing areas have been identified over the past year and we give further information about these below

Employment contracts

The employment contract sets out the terms and conditions of the trainee's agreement with the training provider, including statutory and contractual rights. A number of enquiries received by the charity relate to terms from the employment contract about which the trainee is unhappy, or which they had not read and/or fully understood at the time they signed the contract.

Enquiries have been very varied and have included:-

- Issues to do with working hours, which can include no defined statement of hours, requirement to work *such hours as are needed* and/or exemption from the Working Time Regulations (which limit weekly hours to 48)
- Issues to do with place of work, for example, allowing for variations in the work site
- Notice requirements, for example, a long notice period required from the trainee
- Reduction of statutory rights

- Financial penalties, for example, a fee to be paid or cost of internal/external training to be paid if the trainee leaves before the end of the placement, or does not start the placement
- Agreement to continue to work for the training provider once the trainee has qualified as a pharmacist.

Once an agreement has been signed, a problem will be difficult, if not impossible, to remedy and so the charity is trying to address this by encouraging the trainee to check the contract thoroughly before signing and seek advice if necessary. We produced a new factsheet on employment contracts for pre-registration trainees during 2017 to look in more detail at the role of a contract and what is in it, and to draw attention to the importance of reading the contract, including specific points to check.

Tutor/employer issues

The issues that were noted in the previous report have continued to be reported to us. Problems with tutors and/or employers accounted for around a quarter of the enquiries received by Pharmacist Support about pre-registration issues in 2016 and around a fifth in 2017. This is a broad category covering a range of issues relating to the quality of training provided and the way the trainee has been treated. A more detailed breakdown of the areas covered under this category, including contact time with tutors, training content, progress reviews and final sign off, bullying, study time, hours of work and salary issues is given in our July 2016 report, *Support provided by Pharmacist Support to pre-registration trainee* and is included in full in the Appendix.

Financial issues

We have continued to be approached by pre-registration trainees for financial help. The number of trainees who received financial assistance dropped in 2016 to 13 (14% of all those receiving help) but then in 2017 the number increased to 29 (23% of the total).

7. Implications for Pharmacist Support

The number of approaches to Pharmacist Support for help has grown steadily since 2009. As awareness of the charity also grows year on year, we anticipate this trend will continue.

Enquiries

In terms of enquiry figures, numbers increase each year. 2016 showed a 35% increase on the previous year and there was a further 32% increase in 2017.

The pre-registration year can be a stressful one anyway but with a number of trainees experiencing additional problems as outlined in the report, there is a need for emotional support, creating a demand on both our enquiry service as well as our Listening Friends service.

Specialist advice referrals

The numbers of individuals referred to Manchester Citizens Advice for specialist advice has also shown a steady increase. Referrals overall were up by 14% in 2016 with another small increase of 3% in 2017 with referrals of pre-registration trainees comprising around 30% each year.

8. Conclusions

Isolation and vulnerability

The majority of trainees have a positive experience in their pre-registration year. However, this is not the case for all trainees.

Some trainees can be isolated with no one external to their training provider to whom they feel they can speak who understands their situation or has experience of it. This is particularly felt where trainees are having difficulties with their placement.

Trainees often report feeling vulnerable and say that this is exacerbated by the behaviour of some individuals in a position of control and power.

Employment practice

Whilst it is the case that issues relating to salary, working hours and study leave are part of the

employment contract, significant inconsistencies in employment practice have continued to be noted as well as behaviour that may contravene the GPhC's standards of conduct, ethics and performance.

Reporting problems

GPhC

The mechanism for the reporting of issues to the GPhC is via its *Reporting a concern* option. The GPhC has introduced a separate process for raising a concern relating to the education and training of pharmacy professionals and wherever appropriate, we highlight this option to trainees who contact us and there is a factsheet on our website giving further information about this procedure.

However, in the main, trainees who contact us say they are reluctant to use it. They feel in a vulnerable situation in terms of the way they may be treated for the rest of the year and of being reliant on their tutor to sign them off and do not therefore wish to risk making the situation worse. They are often also wary about passing on specific details of the training provider. It may be that some providers continue to behave in a similar way year on year but this cannot be determined while trainees do not report. Some trainees prefer just to leave their placement and find an alternative provider.

Oriel

With the introduction of the new Oriel system for allocation of pre-registration training places, there is another body with a significant overview of training placements. However, although there is a complaints procedure for the Oriel application process, should there be dissatisfaction with an Oriel placement, it is not yet clear whether there would be a process for the trainee to report an issue and how Oriel might respond.

Appendix

A: Pharmacist Support service provision statistics

Year	Percentage of enquiries from pre-reg trainees	Percentage of people financially assisted who were trainees	Percentage of Listening Friends cases
2009	24% (70)	27% (45)	22% (16)
2010	31% (107)	26% (39)	39% (30)
2011	24% (97)	22% (32)	18% (18)
2012	14% (64)	14% (22)	20% (19)
2013	27% (177)	17% (28)	31% (15)
2014	29% (212)	25% (40)	23% (14)
2015	30% (239)	28% (38)	22% (14)
2016	29% (291)	14% (13)	27% (11)
2017	29% (421)	23% (29)	26% (28)

B: GPhC figures for pharmacists, trainees and MPharm students

Status	Number
Pharmacists	43,500 (March 2011) 45,435 (March 2012) 47,407 (March 2013) 48,815 (March 2014) 50,292 (March 2015) 51,906 (March 2016) 53,967 (March 2017)
Pre-registration trainees	2,505 (2011) (new trainees) 2,651 (2012) (new trainees) 2,719 (2013) (new trainees) 3,000 (July 2015) 2,975 (October 2016) 3,181 (July 2017)
MPharm students	14,559 (2013-14) 14,427 (2014-15) 14,299 (2015-16) 13,940 (2016-17)

C: Pre-registration assessment pass rates Whole cohort pass rates

Year	June	September
2011	85.5%	89.6%
2012	94.5%	58.2%
2013	78%	69.2%

2014	85.3%	60.9%
2015	74%	64%
2016	95%	84.9%
2017	78.2%	58.3%

D: Tutor/employer issues

The paragraphs below are taken from the section on tutor/employment issues from the 2016 report.

Contact time with tutors

The GPhC pre-registration manual recommends that the trainee makes sure the hours they usually work each week overlap with their tutor for at least 80% of the time they are working. They also state that the tutor is expected to meet with the trainee at least once per fortnight to ensure regular feedback is provided and to complete formal progress reviews.

Trainees contact us because the level of their contact with their tutor does not meet this minimum expectation. This can be for various reasons such as tutors not being based at the same location as their trainees and/or having very minimal contact with their trainees.

Training content

In the report of the 2013/14 GPhC survey, 15% of trainees rated the quality of support received as poor or very poor, 78% thought their tutor had adhered to the learning contract, 60% rated their educational supervision as good or excellent, 22% as adequate and 17% as poor or very poor.

Trainees have expressed to us dissatisfaction with coverage of the GPhC assessment syllabus, not being given sufficient relevant experience and being asked to spend significant amounts of time on tasks, such as cleaning and shelf-stocking.

In contrast, some trainees have reported being asked to carry out tasks that only a qualified pharmacist should do.

In 2015, we started to see an increase in approaches from trainees in the first few weeks of their training who were unhappy with their placement and were considering moving or had already decided to move placement.

Study time

Although there are no specific requirements set down in relation to the amount of study time that a trainee can take, the GPhC Learning Contract requires both tutor and tutee to sign that they agree the training will be self-directed, *with mutually agreed time dedicated to study and reflection on learning that will be documented in a portfolio for joint review.*

This is an area about which we often receive enquiries, with a number of trainees asking us if there are any rules/guidance regarding the amount of study time to be provided. We have a number of examples from trainees who have been refused any study time at all by their tutor. In contrast, others receive support from their employer and may have external training paid for them.

Progress reviews and final sign off

The Pre-registration Manual states that if a trainee does not have a satisfactory progress review, it is vital that they and their tutor define clear expectations that would result in a 'satisfactory' outcome at the next progress report. The GPhC's *Pre-registration tutor development* document suggests an action plan is agreed with a review date. A number of trainees have contacted us with queries about their progress reviews. Some trainees have reported having had no progress reviews at all, others are unclear whether they have had a review, others again have undergone significant proportions of their training and have had no satisfactory reviews and no structured feedback or action plan to address this.

Some trainees contact us because they have passed the registration assessment and had a successful 39 week progress review but their tutor is not willing to give them final sign off. For trainees in this situation, they will need to undertake a further period of training for which they may not be paid. The pre-registration provider is not always willing to keep them on and in this case they will be required to find a new provider who is willing to take them on for a further six month period.

Bullying behaviour

We receive a number of concerning reports from trainees about behaviour they perceive as bullying or inappropriate. We note also that the summary of the GPhC survey expressed concern that 15 trainees reported experiencing bullying during their training. The range of behaviour reported to Pharmacist Support is wide and includes:-

- constant criticism and/or belittling, which may be in front of colleagues
- inappropriate sexual conduct
- inappropriate verbal behaviour
- threats and intimidation about the consequences of trainees not carrying out certain required actions
- threats of being reported to the GPhC for a range of inappropriate reasons
- physical abuse
- discriminatory behaviour
- harassment on the grounds of gender or sexuality
- refusal to allow statutory annual leave entitlement.

This can have a significant health impact and we have been in contact with a number of trainees reporting anxiety and work-related stress.

Salary issues

Hospital trainee salaries are paid according to a specified salary band (£21,692 per year in April 2015) *Note: £21,909 from April 2017 (more in London and the South East).*

A community pharmacy receives a payment of £18,440 for a year's pre-registration training but there is no set amount of this payment that must be passed on to a trainee. We have had reports from trainees receiving salaries ranging from the full payment received by the pharmacy to minimum wage. We have also had reports of some trainees being asked to work for periods without pay.

Hours of work

There is no set number of hours that a trainee must work each week – the GPhC defines full-time training as between 35 and 45 hours per week. Trainees have reported to Pharmacist

Support being required to work beyond the 45 hours maximum. Trainees working long hours report this as having a significant impact on their health and wellbeing, time and energy they have available to study and family life.

E: Failing the registration assessment

Paragraphs below are taken from the failing the registration assessment section in the 2016 report.

Failing the first attempt

Sitting an examination is a stressful experience and failing can be very traumatic. By the time a trainee sits the registration assessment for the first time, it is a minimum of five years since the commencement of their MPharm. They have been working for the past year and are anticipating finally qualifying and working as a pharmacist with a commensurate salary. A number have already taken on long term financial commitments, for example, car finance.

If the first attempt was in June, the trainee has to manage until October, taking a second attempt in late September and then waiting a month for the result. This is a difficult period, particularly for those trainees without family or other support. Financially, finding temporary work while waiting to resit is not considered by many as an option as they wish to use the time to revise and prepare for the second attempt. The requirement for claiming jobseeker's allowance is that the claimant is available for and is actively seeking work. It is very difficult for a trainee in this situation to confirm that they meet these two requirements.

If the first attempt was in September, they have to find the means to support themselves until the following July. Assuming temporary work is available, this may be more viable, particularly in the earlier months and, if they are actively looking for work and meet the other criteria, they can qualify for benefit. Although there may be plenty of time to revise, undertake further training and perhaps see a personal tutor, these can incur costs, plus the trainee must pay a further registration assessment entry fee.

For trainees facing this situation, we have helped by provision of a range of our services, including specialist benefits advice, financial assistance and a listening ear in the form of a Listening Friend.

Failing the second attempt

Failing the assessment for the second time has significant additional consequences. The trainee cannot sit the assessment for the third and final time until they have completed a further six months of supervised employment in a patient facing establishment. There is no guarantee that this will be funded – while there are a small number of trainees who manage to find paid work, we are aware of a number of trainees who have managed to find a pharmacy that will agree to provide six months' work experience but who have not been paid for their work. They do not meet the eligibility criteria for jobseeker's allowance during this period as they are not available for work. Some state help may be available towards rent and council tax but such a long period with limited or in some cases no income can cause severe hardship and significant and continued stress, against the background of preparation for the last attempt at the assessment.

Trainees in this situation may need to move to a different area of the country to find a placement, which can leave them living away from their family and support networks, sometimes with significant relocation costs.

If a placement is paid this is usually at a low rate and trainees may still require some level of financial input from the charity to cover essential living costs.

In terms of the additional six months, there is no minimum working hours requirement – the trainee must carry out their own assessment of what they need to do to enable them to pass the assessment, which trainees speaking to us have found confusing, given there is also no requirement in terms of the content of the work. The supervising pharmacist must sign a declaration confirming the dates the trainee has worked and that they do not know of any reason under 7.11 of the Standards of Conduct, Ethics

and Performance relating to the actions, professional performance of health of the trainee that would prevent their registration as a pharmacist.

Some trainees undertaking the additional six months work placement have reported being asked to work very long hours, even when not being paid, which impacts negatively on their ability to study. They also say this particularly vulnerable situation makes them reluctant to challenge their supervisor and adds to their stress and anxiety.

In our experience, trainees are confused by the requirements of the six months' work experience, in particular, the role of the supervising pharmacist and we have had concerns expressed to us by trainees that they will not be 'signed off' if they do not, for example, work a certain number of hours.

There can be concerns on the part of the pharmacy where they are taking on a trainee on a volunteer basis, in terms of the status of the trainee and their rights, whether they should agree a contract with the trainee, what they should do regarding insurance. For the trainee, if they are not an employee they have no employment rights, other than the right as a worker not to be discriminated against. They can request expenses but there is no obligation to pay them.

In the main, the individuals we support in this situation are stressed and anxious, finding it difficult to work, live and prepare for their final attempt.