

**From: Chief Pharmaceutical Officer  
Mrs Cathy Harrison**



**To:**

**Registrants of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern  
Ireland**

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Dear Colleague,

### **A new era for pharmacist education and training**

The approval by the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland of [new initial education and training standards for pharmacists](#) marks a fundamental and exciting shift towards clinical practice for pharmacists. It marks the biggest change in pharmacy education since the introduction of a four-year Master's level degree in 1997, and before that the requirement for a university degree to become a pharmacist in 1970.

As Chief Pharmaceutical Officer I wholeheartedly welcome these long anticipated and essential changes, which are being introduced as part of the wider joint reform of the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists taking place across the UK and which support the implementation of the recommendations for change made in the recently published [Pharmacy Workforce Review](#).

While still retaining sufficient scientific training to support rational and logical thinking, the changes to the standards will help to generate new cohorts of pharmacists with enhanced clinical skills, developed across an improved five-year continuum of training before registration, satisfying the ever increasing demand for high quality pharmacy professional skills from patients and the health service.

This new generation of pharmacists will be independent prescribers from their day of registration and so will be able to play a much bigger part in caring for patients with long term health conditions, in partnership with patients, carers and other members of the healthcare team.

While these reforms will help to prepare the pharmacists of the future for increasingly clinical roles across all sectors, they also come at a critically important time for the existing pharmacist workforce in Northern Ireland. Each of you has risen to the challenges posed by the pandemic emergency, and as we seek to rebuild the Health Service after the pandemic it is more important than ever that today's pharmacists are fully supported to develop their knowledge and skills along clear career and workforce development pathways.

I am committed to working with education and training providers to ensure that postgraduate professional development remains fit for purpose and is aligned to these initial education and training reforms, as part of the Department's commitment to implementing the recommendations in the Pharmacy Workforce Review over the coming months and years.

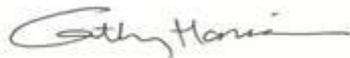
I am very grateful to the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland and the General Pharmaceutical Council for leading this important work and would encourage all partners, from Government to employers, universities to statutory education and professional bodies, to work closely together to implement the changes required.

Organisations will need to commit further resources to ensure that the changes are implemented quickly and effectively and at the scale and urgent pace that is needed. This includes Government and statutory education bodies making sure the necessary funds are in place, and I am committed to working to secure the necessary funding for full implementation of these changes as part of our wider commitments on pharmacy workforce reform.

Importantly, bringing current and future students with us along this journey will be critical, demonstrating to them the great career opportunities they will have through this exciting development.

Thank you to all those pharmacy professionals working to support people during this very challenging pandemic and I hope this is a welcome piece of good news during difficult times.

Yours sincerely



**Mrs Cathy Harrison**

**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**