Council meeting 13 September 2012 09.12/C/05

Public business

Enhancing our understanding of issues within the pharmacy team

Purpose
To update Council on work undertaken and future plans in relation to enhancing our understanding of current issues within the pharmacy team.

Recommendations:

The Council is asked to consider the feedback and analysis in the paper and agree:

i. The proposal to undertake an all registrant survey to enhance our information and evidence base
ii. Our intention to assess the need for further work for the GPhC in relation to five identified themes within this paper.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Following the end of the transitional period and the introduction of statutory regulation of pharmacy technicians, Council identified the need for a review of how skills mix is regulated within the pharmacy team. This is set out in the GPhC Corporate Plan 2012-15.

1.2 To inform our policy development, the executive commissioned some desk research and stakeholder interviews, conducted by an external consultant.

1.3 The purpose of this preliminary research was not to identify solutions, but to enable us to better understand:
• The history of both qualifications and role development within the pharmacy workforce.

• Current concerns in relation to how the pharmacy team operates (in all settings, but predominantly community and hospital) and the impact of compulsory statutory regulation of pharmacy technicians

• The perceptions of stakeholders in relation to the ‘priority issues’ for the GPhC in relation to the wider ‘pharmacy team’

2.0 ‘Headlines’ from the stock take exercise

2.1 Much of the feedback highlighted in the stakeholder interviews confirmed and reinforced anecdotal feedback received previously. Concerns and specific questions were expressed about a range of issues including:

• the impact of regulation and distribution of pharmacy technicians within the workforce;

• concern about certain roles within the pharmacy team including Accredited or Accuracy Checking Technicians;

• education and training issues including different requirements from different sectors for enhanced or tailored competency based training;

• desire for greater specificity about scope of practice for pharmacy technicians and other members of the pharmacy team;

• how regulation of technicians has changed accountability within the pharmacy setting; and,

• a range of detailed questions about skills and skills mix.

2.2 However, after further reflection and analysis, including taking into account feedback from the registered pharmacies consultation and the recent stakeholder event on revalidation, it appears that some of the issues raised may be more accurately described as ‘symptoms’ of much more fundamental questions. These issues go far beyond a question about skills mix in the workforce and can be broken down into some wider themes for consideration.

3.0 Emerging themes

3.1 Each of the issues raised by stakeholders can be categorised within the following themes.
i. **Understanding the pharmacy workforce:** for all those interviewed as part of the ‘stock-take’ exercise there was consistent feedback about a lack of knowledge about the roles, activities and sector registered pharmacy technicians were working in. This information gap was causing problems for many involving in planning or policy making at a national level. Additionally, a number of questions were raised about support staff job roles and titles.

ii. **The need to embed professionalism:** a number of concerns were expressed about the need to build understanding and awareness of what it means to be a professional with the new registrant base. Also a wider concern about professionalisms within pharmacy as a whole and not limited to pharmacy technicians.

iii. **Team based issues (including developing clinical governance in community):** Much of the feedback presented used terms such as ‘accountability’ or ‘delegation’. However, it appears that, particularly for those giving feedback from a community pharmacy perspective, the issue relates to how team management and systems within the pharmacy contribute to good patient care. This issue appears to be about wider issues of clinical governance with links to corporate governance (sometimes referred to within the NHS as Integrated Governance).

iv. **Leadership and management:** Although feedback has been given about a desire for further scope of practice information about a range of roles, it does raise questions about the role of registrants as both leaders (including leadership skills at all levels) and managers.

v. **Education and training requirements:** A number of the stakeholders gave feedback about education and training requirements within the workforce. Some of these related to future workforce planning; some to concerns about variable education and training of pharmacy technicians grandparented onto the registers; and, others expressed concerns about the current education outcomes for all support staff. A strong sub-theme is the perceived growing divergence between the requirements of hospital and community employers.

### 4.0 Analysis and initial conclusions

4.1 Reviewing and reflecting upon the feedback we have received through both this stock take review and through the many meetings and consultation events which have taken place over the past twelve to eighteen months it is possible to conclude that a number of this issues which have been raised are reflective of much broader changes and not simply a ‘regulatory problem’.

4.2 Concerns described as either related to ‘skills mix issues’ and demands for clarification of job role or scope of practice definition appear related to wider
challenges and issues and in a number of cases may not be for the regulator to resolve but reflect wider political, economic and professional leadership issues.

5.0 Developing a strategic response

5.1 We are proposing looking at the wider issues raised, rather than dealing with each of the ‘symptoms’ in turn. We see this as more likely to ensure wider long-term issues are addressed in a coherent way and by the organisation or body best placed to address it, working on its own or in partnership.

5.2 Defining aims and objectives is not simple but based on the feedback from the stock take exercise and our own consultation and engagement work, we propose the following overarching aims and objectives in this area of work:

- A requirement to understand better, on an ongoing basis, our registrant groups including who they are, what they do and where they work;

- Respond effectively to those ‘pharmacy team’ related issues which are raised which both have a patient safety related focus and are matters for the regulator;

- Ensure clarity is provided to external stakeholders (including registrants) as to what issues we see as matters for us, as well communicating more widely and challenging and working with other organisations where we consider they are a matter for others.

5.3 It is therefore our intention, by way of early priority actions to undertaken the following by way of considering a strategic response to each of the five identified themes in paragraph 3.1 above (Understanding the pharmacy workforce; the need to embed professionalism; team based issues, including developing clinical governance in community; leadership and management; education and training requirements).

5.4 These priority actions are:

i. Develop further our research base by undertaking an all registrant survey (parts of which would be similar to the RPSGB commissioned three year census)

ii. Review our policy and communications requirements under each of the identified themes and consider whether specific projects are required.

6.0 An all registrant survey

6.1 It has become increasingly clear that our policy making needs to be informed by more up to date information in relation to the nature of the registrant base. This is
particularly the case in relation to pharmacy technicians as a new registrant group.

6.2 In future, following the development and implementation of a new IT solution to our central database, we would hope to be able to capture, code and analyse data in a more integrated and effective manner. In the short term, our assessment is that this kind of information can be best collected through an all registrant survey.

6.3 This survey, project managed through our internal research function, would be designed with the assistance of external expertise and delivered following a tendering process.

6.4 Preliminary scoping and design work has begun and we would expect the survey to be undertaken towards the end of 2012 with results analysed and report produced in the first quarter of 2013.

7.0 Risk implications

7.1 There are no specific risks issues associated with proposals in this paper.

8.0 Equality and diversity issues

8.1 The all registrant survey mentioned in this paper will assist us further in identifying any specific equality and diversity issues.

Recommendations:

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ii. Our intention to assess the need for further work for the GPhC in relation to five identified themes within this paper.

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