

Reaccreditation of a Medicines Counter Assistant training programme, Buttercups Training Ltd.

Report of a reaccreditation event, 24 June 2014

Introduction

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in Great Britain.

Buttercups Training Ltd ('the provider') was originally accredited by the previous regulator, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, in 2007 to provide a training programme for medicines counter assistants. It was subsequently reaccredited by the GPhC in January 2011 subject to three conditions. These were:

- i. The provider must submit a full report on the risk assessment model used. This report must include the rationale for the model along with explanations of the grading system. The provider will also need to include a detailed explanation of how this system supports the monitoring of safe and effective practice. This is to meet criterion 2a. In response to this condition, Buttercups provided a report that included a description of the rationale for the model; this indicated how the system supported the monitoring of safe and effective practice.
- ii. The provider must clarify within the course materials of how students with learning and specific needs are supported and addressed. This is to meet Criterion 3h. In response to this condition, the training materials have been edited to address teaching on professionalism and approaches to ethical problems and the documentation provided for the reaccreditation includes these changes.
- iii. The provider must liaise with the GPhC to confirm the requirements of the awarding certificate and submit the certificate for approval by the GPhC. This is to meet criterion 3c. This condition was addressed through liaison with the GPhC's Quality Assurance Manager for Education and submission of sample certificates.

In line with the General Pharmaceutical Council's (GPhC's) process for reaccreditation of medicines counter assistant courses, an event was scheduled for 24 June 2014 to review the programme's suitability for reaccreditation.

Reaccreditation was carried out in line with the General Pharmaceutical Council's processes and was to the General Pharmaceutical Council's 2010 standards for accreditation of medicines counter assistant courses, which reflect the knowledge and understanding equivalent to the three units of the Pharmacy Services Skills level 2 NVQ (QCF) (see Appendix 2).

Documentation

Documentation was submitted to the GPhC and a pre-event meeting was held on 2 June 2014. At the pre-event the provider was advised of a number of areas within the course documentation that required updating prior to the reaccreditation event. These included an overview of how the programme has developed since the last reaccreditation including a summary of any changes, information about the number of trainees and how Buttercups had responded to the conditions of the 2010 reaccreditation. Some of this information could be found within the submission documents but should have been summarised for the accreditation team.

The provider responded to the feedback by providing updated documentation for review by the team before the reaccreditation event.

The event

The reaccreditation event was held on 24 June 2014 at the General Pharmaceutical Council, 129 Lambeth Road, London.

The Accreditation Team:

The GPhC's accreditation team ('the team') comprised:

Name	Designation at the time of accreditation event
Mr Peter Curphey*	Accreditation team leader, Community Pharmacy Consultant
Mrs Catherine Davies	Accreditation team member (Pharmacy Technician), Health Science Co-ordinator, Stoke on Trent College
Mrs Sylvia Hikins	Accreditation team member (Lay), Non-Executive Director and Vice-Chair, UC24 Ltd

along with:

Name	Designation at the time of event
Ms Joanne Martin *	Quality Assurance Manager (Education), General Pharmaceutical Council
Professor Brian Furman	Rapporteur, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde
Ms Jenny Clapham *	Observer, General Pharmaceutical Council

*attended pre-event meeting on 2 June 2014

Declarations of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared'.

The accreditation criteria

	Accreditation team's commentary
1. The Training Programme	<p>The course, which is delivered by distance learning and taught at Qualifications Credit Framework level 2, comprises a set of 11 modules, each followed by a number of multiple choice questions (MCQs) which are completed alongside a workbook in which a number of tasks must be completed; these tasks allow learners to demonstrate their understanding of the roles of the pharmacy team, as well as their ability to apply their knowledge to their own activities in the pharmacy, including appropriate referral to senior staff when required. The assessment strategy enables the workplace pharmacist to assess learner competence in dealing safely and appropriately with the public when addressing queries about minor ailments, and providing informed, evidence based advice to promote a healthy lifestyle. The assessments have been developed by senior pharmacists at Buttercups Training Ltd advised by members of the pharmacy team, who either have current or recent practice in community pharmacy; all assessment relate to current practice and products. The course may be taken either entirely on-line, or through paper-based material; those trainees electing to study using the paper-based approach also have access to the on-line material. The learning is supported by interactive, web-based tutorials and exercises.</p> <p>All four accreditation criteria relating to the training programme are met.</p>
2. Academic Management Structures	<p>An initial risk assessment is undertaken on the trainee and the place of work and there is frequent contact by telephone with the host pharmacists and all trainees. The risk assessment covers a variety of points, each of which is assigned a tariff, according to the company's view of the degree of risk incurred by the premises or the trainee. Depending on the outcome of the risk assessment, there may be more frequent professional discussions and/or personal visits to the place of work; risk assessments achieving above a certain score will trigger a visit to the premises.</p> <p>The company has a bespoke learner management system (LMS) that allows tracking of learners, who are monitored monthly, with contact being made if they fall behind. Managers can see their own learners using the on-line tool, which is especially valuable for training managers in multiples, who can see the progress of their trainees. Assessments comprise both MCQs, as well as completion of the workbook tasks, these tasks being signed off by the supervising pharmacist, who also testifies to the competence of the learners in aspects such as communicating appropriately with patients. Learners complete MCQs on-line or using paper, with a final test being taken in the branch under supervision and signed off by the pharmacist. If learners fail to meet the required standard, they are allowed two re-sits. A failed third attempt requires the learner to contact Buttercups Training, leading to counselling by one of the pharmacist tutors; there are procedures in place to deal with appeals against assessment decisions, as well as for dealing with suspected plagiarism and/or malpractice.</p> <p>The course is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Principal Pharmacist. Any relevant changes are disseminated to learners via the</p>

	<p>website, by e-mail or by post. Important changes impacting on patient safety are made immediately, while others are subject to proofing by the literacy team, followed by peer review and then submission to the editor. Anticipated changes are highlighted in the course material and appropriate exercises for the learners would be incorporated.</p> <p>All of the four criteria relating to Academic and Management Structures are met.</p>
<p>3. Resources</p>	<p>Buttercups employs 65 members of staff, most of whom work at the company's base in Nottingham. Although all training is done through distance learning, where additional training is required, Buttercups staff members travel to the learner's workplace. Two teams, consisting of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and science graduates, are responsible for the tutoring and assessing of programmes and assisting in the development of materials, the last being under the direction of the management team and supported by a dedicated course development pharmacist. There is a learning support team consisting of mathematics and English tutors, and a Professional Services team who are responsible for the processing of queries and administration support. The company also has an in-house IT team. There is a bespoke learning management system (LMS), which holds data on trainees, including special needs, ethnicity and any disability. The system can produce reports on current learners, withdrawals and completers and permits learners and employers to access learner's records relating to their progress; it can create automated reports for employers and can generate completion rates as well as workplace sector and data relevant to equal opportunities.</p> <p>Buttercups has a help-line which operates 24 hours per day and seven days per week and learners can access a tutor at any time. Through its partnership with local Further Education Colleges, Buttercups has access to other resources, including counselling services, key skills tutors, and welfare officers, who can signpost trainees to the appropriate agencies. The company use feedback from learners and employers, and conducts exit interviews with completing trainees; the feedback thus obtained is used to inform course development. Post qualification learners are encouraged to continue with their learning through free membership of the company's MCA Academy, which is also open to other learners such as technicians. The Academy provides continuing professional development, allowing members to keep up to date.</p> <p>All of the eight accreditation criteria relating to Resources are met.</p>

Summary and conclusions

The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council that the Medicines Counter Assistant programme delivered by Buttercups should be reaccredited for a full period of 3 years. There were no conditions or recommendations.

The accreditation team identified an area of strength in the innovative e-learning opportunities provided for the learners.

The full record and report includes other comments from the team and the Registrar regards the record and report in its entirety as its formal view on provision. Providers are required to take all comments into account as part of the reaccreditation process.

There is a *standing condition* for all course providers, which is that documentary references to the pharmacy regulator must be to the General Pharmaceutical Council. Also, if any other amendments are required to be made to documents for accuracy or completeness, they will be detailed in the record. The provider must detail the changes which have been made with reference to the specific document in the mapping document that will be sent. Each certificate must be forwarded to the GPhC for approval.

The team's recommendations are not binding on the Registrar, who may accept, modify or reject them. The accreditation team's feedback is confidential until it has been ratified by the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council but it may be shared with staff and students internally.

Following the above event, the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council subsequently accepted the accreditation team's recommendation and approved the course for reaccreditation for a further period of three years, until the end of September 2017.

Appendix 1 - Accreditation Criteria for Medicines Counter Assistant training programmes

1. The training programme

- a. The course content covers the knowledge and understanding associated with units Pharm 05 (unit 4) Pharm 07 (unit 5) and Pharm 32 (Unit 15) of the Pharmacy services skills S/NVQ level 2 (QCF)
- b. The programme is taught at Qualifications Credit Framework level 2.
- c. The programme is planned with reference to the Medicines Counter Assistant template.
- d. For each unit, the transfer of underpinning knowledge into the workplace is demonstrated through the use of a variety of methods

2. Academic and Management Structures

- a. Assessment process and strategies assure appropriate standards in assessment and that students are able to demonstrate fitness for purpose.
- b. In the processes of programme review and development, the training provider has taken account of advances in pharmacy practice, for instance recent POM to P reclassifications, and developments potentially impacting on pharmacy.
- c. Course regulations include procedures for appeals against assessment decisions
- d. Course regulations include procedures for dealing with suspected plagiarism and/or malpractice

3. Resources

- a. Buildings, human, equipment, and other resources available to the training provider are sufficient for the effective delivery of the course to the numbers of students on the course, and overall.
- b. Record keeping systems are able to generate data on candidates completing, completion rates, student sector of practice and disability.
- c. Systems are in place for issuing certificates of completion to successful students in the GPhC's approved format
- d. There is an appropriate mix of tutors, mentors and assessors.
- e. The student has access to a personal tutor or tutors for academic guidance and pastoral care.
- f. The student is instructed in the use of information resources.
- g. There are adequate student feedback mechanisms in place.
- h. The training provider seeks to provide the student with a positive learning experience.

Appendix 2 – Programme requirements

The programme must cover the content of Units 4 (Pharm 05), 5 (Pharm 07) and 15 (Pharm 32) of the NVQ (QCF) level 2 Pharmacy Services

Unit 4. Assist in the sale of medicines and products

To demonstrate knowledge and understanding in this NOS , assistants should be able to apply:

Legislation, policy and good practice:

- 4.1. A working knowledge of the pharmacy protocol on the sale of medicines and SOPs including:
 - a) What is listed in them
 - b) How to use them
 - c) Why it is important that SOPs should be followed at all times
- 4.2. A factual knowledge of the legal responsibility and authority of the pharmacist and others in the organisation
- 4.3. A working knowledge of legal and ethical requirements for confidentiality

Specific health related knowledge and skills:

- 4.4. A working knowledge of the main actions and side effects of the active ingredients within commonly used non-prescription medicines
- 4.5. A working knowledge of the differences between:
 - a) General Sales List (GSL) medicines
 - b) Pharmacy (P)
 - c) Prescription Only Medicines (POM) items

Procedures and techniques:

- 4.6. A working knowledge of the use of questioning techniques such as 2WHAM
- 4.7. A working knowledge of the needs of different types of individuals
- 4.8. A working knowledge of the sources of information to access
- 4.9. A working knowledge of the information that is suitable to give individuals
- 4.10. A working knowledge of the type of information/advice that needs to be referred to a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician

Unit 5. Receive prescriptions from individuals

To demonstrate knowledge and understanding in this NOS , assistants should be able to apply:

Legislation, policy and good practice:

- 5.1 A working knowledge of the importance of working within the limits of their own role and recognising when to refer to an appropriate person
- 5.2 A working knowledge of Standard Operating Procedures regarding the receiving of prescriptions and the importance of adhering to them at all times
- 5.3 A working knowledge of current legislation relating to prescription charges and exemptions and differences in practice across the UK
- 5.1 A working knowledge of regulations and procedures relating to prescriptions for clinical trials
- 5.2 A working knowledge of the relevant national and local guidelines, policies and procedures that are available and how and when they should be accessed
- 5.3 A working knowledge of the different types of prescribers

Specific health related knowledge and skills:

- 5.4 A working knowledge of the different types of prescriptions and when they are used
- 5.5 A working knowledge of exemptions and how individuals can claim refunds, including the use of official forms and prepayment certificates

Procedures and techniques:

- 5.6 A working knowledge of how to deal with individuals with special needs
- 5.7 A working knowledge of the transactional and administration procedures as required by governmental regulations and those that apply to the workplace

Records and documentation:

- 5.8 A working knowledge of the importance of maintaining dispensary records

Unit 15. Assist in the issuing of prescribed items

To demonstrate knowledge and understanding in this NOS , assistants should be able to apply :

Legislation, policy and good practice:

- 15.1 A working knowledge of the limits of their own role and when to refer to an appropriate person
- 15.2 A working knowledge of principles for issuing dispensed medicines and products and the local Standard Operating Procedures that relate to this
- 15.3 A working knowledge of the current ethical and legal requirements that govern the issuing of a prescription

Procedures and techniques:

- 15.4 A working knowledge of how to deal with individuals with special needs
- 15.5 A working knowledge of the importance of confirming the individual's identity before issuing dispensed items
- 15.6 A working knowledge of the importance of providing information on:
 - a) the storage and maintenance of prescribed items
 - b) possible side effects

Records and documentation:

- 15.7 A factual knowledge of the importance of maintaining dispensary records including the use of the dispensary computer
- 15.8 A factual knowledge of how medicines are administered

Records and documentation:

- 15.9 A working knowledge of the importance of selecting the correct equipment for use
- 15.10 A working knowledge of the properties of different types of container types and when to use each