



20 January 2021

Dear Colleagues

## **New era for pharmacist education and training**

Today's publication by the General Pharmaceutical Council [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 the heads of profession across Great Britain, we wholeheartedly welcome these long anticipated and essential changes and we look forward to this being introduced UK wide shortly.

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 NHS.

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.

As heads of profession, we are also committed to ensuring the existing pharmacist professional workforce can develop their skills as required so that they too can practice at an enhanced clinical level. We must also make sure that postgraduate professional development is fit for purpose and is aligned to these initial education and training reforms.

We are very grateful to the General Pharmaceutical Council for leading this important work and we 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 Governments and statutory education bodies making sure the necessary funds are in place immediately.

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.

Finally, whilst this initiative is focused on pharmacists, we are very conscious that educational reforms will be required for pharmacy technicians too, and we will continue to encourage the necessary developments.

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

Best regards



**Dr Keith Ridge CBE**  
**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**  
**NHS England and NHS Improvement**



**Andrew Evans**  
**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**  
**Welsh Government**



**Dr Alison Strath**  
**Interim Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**  
**Scottish Government**