

Provisional registration for pharmacists – survey findings

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Background

Provisional registration for pharmacists

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the ability of trainees completing the pharmacist pre-registration scheme in 2020 to finish their training as planned, and to sit the registration assessment as originally scheduled. As a response to this, we have introduced provisional registration for these trainees.

The aim of provisional registration is to support and enable trainees to use their education and training to support NHS services and provide patient care effectively, while maintaining standards for entry to the register and protecting patient safety.

The individuals on this register are provisionally entered on Part 1 of the register as a pharmacist for a time-limited period, subject to certain restrictions as set out in **Initial education and training standards for pharmacists: criteria for registering provisionally**. They are required to meet the **standards for pharmacy professionals** including working within the limits of their skills and competence.

Risk assessments and other requirements

We have produced **information for employers on their responsibilities** if they employ a provisionally-registered pharmacist, which sets out what employers must do to ensure safe and effective care and pharmacy services when employing a provisionally-registered pharmacist.

Employers must complete a risk assessment before a provisionally-registered pharmacist starts work. Employers must also put other requirements in place to support the provisionally-registered pharmacist and protect patient safety. These requirements include that the provisionally-registered pharmacist must practise under the guidance and direction of a senior pharmacist.

Survey methodology

We sent a survey to all provisionally-registered pharmacists who joined the register in August 2020 to enable us to check that employers have fulfilled their obligation to conduct a risk assessment. We also took this opportunity to ask provisionally-registered pharmacists about their employment and the pharmacy settings they work in, whether they have a named senior pharmacist and whether they have access to clinical advice and guidance if they need it. We provided opportunities for provisionally-registered pharmacists to raise any concerns they have on these matters.

We asked respondents to provide us with details about their employers (employer name, address and contact details) to enable us to follow up with employers directly where we are concerned that obligations are not being met.

The survey allowed respondents to tell us about up to two jobs that they work in as pharmacists. However, only eight respondents reported working in a second job, therefore these data are not presented in detail in this report. Among this group, one risk assessment had not been completed and no concerns were raised in relation to these jobs.

On 1 September 2020, the online survey, hosted by Smart Survey, was emailed to 2,276 provisionally-registered pharmacists, with a reminder sent on 8 September. We received responses from **892 registrants**, giving a **39% response rate**.

This report presents tables of grouped frequencies and percentages of responses to questions in the survey. Please note that not all percentages add to 100% due to rounding.

Survey findings

Key findings

Response rate

- 892 provisional registrants responded out of 2,276 (39% response rate).

Employment and settings

- 86% (769 out of 892) of respondents were employed as pharmacists, with the top two settings being community pharmacy (56%; 432 out of 769) and hospital/secondary care (40%; 311 out of 769).
- 71% (87 out of 123) of those not currently working as pharmacists were looking for a job as a pharmacist.
- 69% (527 out of 769) of respondents worked in the same setting they trained in.

Risk assessments

- 90% (690 out of 769) of respondents reported that their employers had completed their risk assessment, 3% (20 out of 769) said they hadn't, and 8% (59 out of 769) didn't know.
- Among respondents working in hospital/secondary care, 5% (15 out of 311) had not been risk assessed, compared to 1% (5 out of 432) of those working in community pharmacy. Following a similar pattern, 11% (33 out of 311) of those in hospital/secondary care didn't know if they had been risk assessed, whereas only 5% (21 out of 432) in community pharmacy didn't know.
- Only 2% (12 out of 769) had concerns about their risk assessments.

Access to clinical advice and guidance

- 96% (740 out of 769) of respondents were informed of who their named senior pharmacist was.
- 98% (756 out of 769) had access to clinical advice and guidance if they needed it.
- Only 1% (9 out of 769) had concerns about their access to clinical advice and guidance.

The following sections present a full breakdown of survey responses. First, we cover employment and settings worked in among respondents, followed by employer risk assessment compliance, and finally access to clinical advice and guidance.

Employment and settings

Near the start of the survey, respondents were asked if they were currently employed as pharmacists and, if so, the settings they worked in. Those who reported that they were not currently employed as pharmacists were further asked if they were looking for work as a pharmacist, and then directed to the end the survey.

Table 1: Current employment as a pharmacist

Base: all respondents (n = 892)

Are you currently employed as a pharmacist?	Count	%
Yes	769	86%
No	123	14%
Total	892	100%

Out of all respondents, 86% reported they were currently employed as pharmacists (Table 1).

Table 2: Current employment in a second job as a pharmacist

Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)

Are you employed as a pharmacist by another company or organisation?	Count	%
Yes	8	1%
No	761	99%
Total	769	100%

Almost all respondents were only employed in one job as a pharmacist (99%), with only 1% reporting that they held a second job (Table 2). Due to these small numbers, data relating to respondents' second jobs are not included in this report.

Table 3: Looking for work as a pharmacist

Base: Those not currently working as pharmacists (n = 123)

Are you currently looking for employment as a pharmacist?	Count	%
Yes	87	71%
No	36	29%
Total	123	100%

Among respondents who were not currently employed as pharmacists, 71% reported that they were looking for work as a pharmacist (Table 3).

Table 4: Setting(s) worked in

Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)

What setting do you currently work in?	Count	%
Community pharmacy (excluding online only)	432	56%
Hospital / secondary care	311	40%
GP practice / primary care	15	2%
Multiple settings	9	1%
Online only pharmacy	2	<1%
Total	769	100%

The two most common settings worked in by respondents were community pharmacy (excluding online; 56%) and hospital/secondary care (40%; Table 4). A small number reported working in multiple settings (1%), which was generally a combination of community pharmacy (excluding online only) with hospital or GP practice.

Table 5: Settings of training compared to settings worked in

Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)

Are you employed in the same setting(s) in which you completed your pre-registration training?	Count	%
Yes	527	69%
No	242	31%
Total	769	100%

We asked respondents if they were employed in the same settings they were trained in - 69% said they were, but 31% of respondents were working in settings that were different to their training (Table 5).

Risk assessments

Table 6: Employer risk assessment compliance

Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)

Has this employer completed your risk assessment?	Count	%
Yes	690	90%
No	20	3%
Don't know	59	8%
Total	769	100%

Table 6 shows that the vast majority of respondents said that their employers had completed their risk assessment (90%) in their main job. However, 3% said they hadn't, and 8% didn't know.

Table 7: Employer risk assessment compliance by setting

Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)

Has this employer completed your risk assessment?	Yes		No		Don't know		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Community pharmacy	406	94%	5	1%	21	5%	432	100%
Hospital / secondary care	263	85%	15	5%	33	11%	311	100%
GP practice / primary care	12	80%	0	0%	3	20%	15	100%
Multiple settings	9	89%	0	0%	1	11%	9	100%
Online only pharmacy	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	2	100%
Total	690	90%	20	3%	59	8%	769	100%

Table 7 shows employer risk assessment compliance by the different settings worked in by respondents. Employers of respondents working in community pharmacy had the highest level of compliance (94%), while employers in hospital/secondary care (85%), GP practice (80%), and multiple settings (89%) had lower levels. However, lower levels of compliance were generally due to respondents saying that they did not know whether their employer had conducted the risk assessment. Only 5% of respondents working in hospital/secondary care said that they had not had a risk assessment, and 1% in community pharmacy. No respondents working in GP practice or across multiple settings reported they had not had one.

Table 8: Concerns about risk assessments*Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)*

Do you have any concerns about your risk assessment?	Count	%
Yes	12	2%
No	757	98%
Total	769	100%

A small number of respondents said they had concerns about their risk assessment (2%; Table 8). These respondents were asked to tell us about their concerns, with the most frequent concern being that the risk assessment had not been completed. A small number of respondents mentioned other concerns relating to their employment arrangements.

Access to clinical advice and guidance

Table 9: Informed of named senior pharmacist*Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)*

In this role, have you been informed of who your named senior pharmacist is?	Count	%
Yes	740	96%
No	13	2%
Don't know	16	2%
Total	769	100%

A large majority of respondents reported that they had been informed of who their named senior pharmacist is (96%; Table 9).

Table 10: Access to clinical advice and guidance*Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)*

In this role, do you have access to clinical advice and guidance when you need it?	Count	%
Yes	756	98%
No	3	0%
Don't know	10	1%
Total	769	100%

Again, almost all respondents reported that they had access to clinical advice and guidance in their roles when they need it (98%; Table 10).

Table 11: Concerns about access to clinical advice and guidance

Base: Those currently working as pharmacists (n = 769)

Do you have any concerns about your access to clinical advice and guidance?	Count	%
Yes	9	1%
No	760	99%
Total	769	100%

Table 11 shows that only a small number of respondents said they had concerns about their access to clinical advice and guidance (1%). Most concerns raised related to accessing appropriate guidance from senior staff members.

Next steps

We will use this information gathered in this survey for insight and intelligence purposes, and take action if and when necessary.

In the small minority of cases where the survey has identified issues with risk assessments and access to clinical support, we will contact employers to seek assurance that they have made steps to rectify these. Our inspectors will follow up where necessary with registered pharmacies.

We will repeat the survey in early October, offering those who did not respond to this initial survey the chance to take part a second time, and also including those who joined the provisional register during September and on 1 October.

