

# Working as a pharmacy professional on the temporary register during the COVID-19 emergency – survey findings

Snap shot on 23 April 2020

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# Background

## Temporary register

On 27 March 2020, we published a temporary register of fit, proper and suitably experienced people who can work as pharmacists and pharmacy technicians during the COVID-19 emergency.

The individuals on this list are pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who had previously voluntarily removed themselves from the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) register or were removed for non-renewal in the last three years, and who did not have any fitness to practice issues. Registrants can opt-out of the temporary register if they wish to be removed.

The pharmacists and pharmacy technicians on the temporary register can practise in Great Britain if they choose during the COVID-19 emergency.

## Survey methodology

We conducted a survey to help us understand how many pharmacy professionals on the temporary register will be working during the pandemic, and what settings they are planning to work in.

As at 14 April 2020, there were a total of 6,515 pharmacy professionals on the temporary register. The online survey, hosted by Smart Survey, was emailed to all those for whom we had an active email address, which was **6,123** pharmacy professionals (3,338 pharmacists and 2,785 pharmacy technicians).

As of 9am on 23 April 2020, we had received 1,309 responses to the survey (21% response rate). Of those, **1,255** respondents reported currently living<sup>1</sup> in England (includes Isle of Wight), Scotland, Wales, Channel Islands or Isle of Man, with the remaining respondents currently living outside of Great Britain (GB). As the pharmacy regulator for GB, the findings below are restricted to these 1,255 respondents.

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<sup>1</sup> Two respondents indicated that they live and work in different countries. For the purposes of our analyses, these respondents have been grouped into the countries where they work.

# Survey findings

## Country of residence and registrant type

**Table 1:** Country of residence

*Base: All respondents (n = 1,255)*

Country	Count (%)
England	1,070 (85%)
Scotland	118 (9%)
Wales	62 (5%)
Channel Islands / Isle of Man	5 (<1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,255 (100)</b>

Table 1 shows that a large majority of respondents currently live in England (85%), followed by Scotland (9%) and Wales (5%), with less than 1% living in Channel Islands / Isle of Man.

**Table 2:** Registrant type

*Base: All respondents (n = 1,255)*

Registrant type	Count (%)
Pharmacist	786 (63%)
Pharmacy technician	469 (37%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,255 (100%)</b>

Around two-thirds of respondents were pharmacists (63%) and one-third were pharmacy technicians (37%; Table 2).

## Plans to work as a pharmacy professional during the COVID-19 emergency

**Table 3:** Plans to work as a pharmacy professional during the COVID-19 emergency by registrant type

Base: All respondents (n = 1,255)

Plans to work as a pharmacy professional during the COVID-19 emergency	Pharmacists Count (%)	Pharmacy technicians Count (%)	Total – pharmacist and pharmacy technicians Count (%)
Yes; I've already started working	109 (14%)	93 (20%)	202 (16%)
Yes; I'm planning to return to work soon	110 (14%)	74 (16%)	184 (15%)
I'm not sure yet	408 (52%)	174 (37%)	582 (46%)
No	159 (20%)	128 (27%)	287 (23%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>786 (100%)</b>	<b>469 (100%)</b>	<b>1,255 (100%)</b>

Table 3 shows that of those in GB who responded to the survey, over a quarter of pharmacists (28%), and over a third of pharmacy technicians (36%), have either already returned to work as a pharmacy professional, or plan to return to work soon.

## Work settings – already working

### Pharmacists

**Table 4:** Work settings for pharmacists already working as pharmacy professionals

Base: Pharmacists already working in pharmacy (n = 109)

Work settings	Count (%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	66 (61%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	26 (24%)
Primary care / GP Practice	7 (6%)
Multiple settings	4 (4%)
Other	4 (4%)
Research, education or training	1 (1%)
I'm not sure yet	1 (1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>109 (100%)</b>

Table 4 shows that community pharmacy is the most common work setting for pharmacists who have already returned to work (61%) followed by secondary care (24%).

For those working across multiple settings, three respondents work across two settings and one respondent works across eight settings. All combinations included community pharmacy, combined most commonly with secondary care, care homes and/or primary care.

The other settings mentioned were Local Authority, Pharmacy Body and Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC).

## Pharmacy technicians

**Table 5:** Work settings for pharmacy technicians already working as pharmacy professionals

*Base: Pharmacy technicians already working in pharmacy (n = 93)*

Work settings	Count (%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	63 (68%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	14 (15%)
Primary care / GP Practice	11 (12%)
Other	3 (3%)
Online only pharmacy	2 (2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>93 (100%)</b>

Pharmacy technicians show a similar pattern to pharmacists, with community pharmacy being the most common work setting among pharmacy technicians who have already returned to work (68%), followed by secondary care (15%; Table 5).

The other settings mentioned were hospice and homecare pharmacy dispensary.

## Total (pharmacists and pharmacy technicians)

**Table 6:** Work settings for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians already working as pharmacy professionals

*Base: Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians already working in pharmacy (n = 202)*

Work settings	Total count (%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	129 (64%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	40 (20%)
Primary care / GP Practice	18 (9%)
Other	7 (3%)

Work settings	Total count (%)
Multiple settings	4 (2%)
Online only pharmacy	2 (1%)
Research, education or training	1 (<1%)
I'm not sure yet	1 (<1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>202 (100%)</b>

Table 6 shows the work settings of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are already working as pharmacy professionals. Community pharmacy (64%) and secondary care (20%) were again the most common settings.

The other settings and multiple settings are discussed above under Table 4 and Table 5.

## Work settings – planning to return to work soon

### Pharmacists

**Table 7:** Work settings for pharmacists who plan to return to work as a pharmacy professional soon

*Base: Pharmacists who plan to return to work as a pharmacy professional soon (n = 110)*

Work settings	Count (%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	48 (44%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	20 (18%)
Multiple settings	9 (8%)
Primary care / GP Practice	3 (3%)
Other	3 (3%)
I'm not sure yet	27 (25%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>110 (100%)</b>

Among pharmacists who plan to return to work soon, the most common work setting reported was community pharmacy (44%), followed by secondary care (18%), with a quarter of respondents (25%) reporting they are not yet sure which setting they will work in (Table 7).

For those intending to work across multiple settings, the number of settings varied from two to four, with most including community pharmacy, primary care and/or secondary care, and some including online only pharmacy, research, education and training and/or care homes.

The other settings mentioned were remote working / from home, and NHS 111.

## Pharmacy technicians

**Table 8:** Work settings for pharmacy technicians who plan to return to work as a pharmacy professional soon

Base: Pharmacy technicians who plan to return to work as a pharmacy professional soon (n = 74)

Work settings	Count (%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	27 (36%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	21 (28%)
Multiple settings	8 (11%)
Online only pharmacy	2 (3%)
Prison pharmacy	2 (3%)
Primary care / GP Practice	1 (1%)
Other	1 (1%)
I'm not sure yet	12 (16%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>74 (100%)</b>

Among pharmacy technicians who plan to return to work soon, the most frequently cited work setting was secondary care (36%), followed by community pharmacy (28%) with a further 16% of respondents being unsure which setting they will return to (Table 8).

Pharmacy technicians planning on working across multiple settings all reported community pharmacy as one of these settings. This was generally combined with primary care, secondary care and/or prison pharmacy, and less frequently with care home and/or research, education or training.

The other setting was NHS 111.

## Total (pharmacists and pharmacy technicians)

**Table 9:** Work settings for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who plan to return to work as a pharmacy professional soon

Base: Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who plan to return to work as a pharmacy professional soon (n = 184)

Work settings	Total count (%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	69 (38%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	47 (26%)
Multiple settings	17 (9%)

Work settings	Total count (%)
Primary care / GP Practice	4 (2%)
Other	4 (2%)
Online only pharmacy	2 (1%)
Prison pharmacy	2 (1%)
I'm not sure yet	39 (21%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>184 (100%)</b>

Table 9 shows the work settings of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who plan to work as pharmacy professionals soon. Among respondents, community pharmacy (38%) and secondary care (26%) were the most common settings, with a further 21% unsure which setting.

The other settings and multiple settings are discussed above under Table 7 and Table 8.

## Work settings – unsure if returning to work

### Pharmacists

**Table 10:** Work settings for pharmacists who are unsure if they will return to work as a pharmacy professional

Base: Pharmacists who are unsure if they will return to work (n = 408)

Work settings	Count (%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	157 (38%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	53 (13%)
Other	17 (4%)
Primary care / GP Practice	16 (4%)
Multiple settings	11 (3%)
Research, education or training	7 (2%)
Online only pharmacy	3 (1%)
Prison pharmacy	1 (<1%)
I'm not sure yet	143 (35%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>408 (100%)</b>

Among pharmacists who were unsure if they would return to work, the most common work setting they would work in was community (38%), followed by secondary care (13%), with a further third (35%) of respondents saying they were not sure (Table 10).

For those intending to work across multiple settings, the number of settings varied between two and three, with almost all including community pharmacy which was mostly combined with secondary care.

Frequently cited other settings were home-based telephone work, including for NHS 111, or any non-face-to-face setting. Some of these respondents mentioned that they or family members are in at-risk groups (older in age, or with health conditions) meaning non-contact work was essential.

## Pharmacy technicians

**Table 11:** Work settings for pharmacy technicians who are unsure if they will return to work as a pharmacy professional

*Base: Pharmacy technicians who are unsure if they will return to work (n = 174)*

Work settings	Count (%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	51 (29%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	42 (24%)
Primary care / GP Practice	8 (5%)
Multiple settings	5 (3%)
Other	3 (2%)
Research, education or training	3 (2%)
Prison pharmacy	1 (1%)
I'm not sure yet	61 (35%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>174 (100%)</b>

Among pharmacy technicians who were unsure if they will return to work, the most frequently cited work setting was secondary care (29%) with a further 35% of respondents being unsure which setting they would work in (Table 11).

Most pharmacy technicians who selected multiple settings reported secondary care or primary care as the settings they would return to, followed by community pharmacy.

The other settings provided were in a non-contact role, medical gas testing and cancer treatment centre.

## Total (pharmacists and pharmacy technicians)

**Table 12:** Work settings for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are unsure if they will return to work as a pharmacy professional

*Base: Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are unsure if they will return to work (n = 582)*

Work settings	Total count (%)
Community pharmacy (excl. online only)	199 (34%)
Secondary care / Hospital pharmacy	104 (18%)
Primary care / GP Practice	24 (4%)
Other	20 (3%)
Multiple settings	16 (3%)
Research, education or training	10 (2%)
Prison pharmacy	2 (<1%)
Online only pharmacy	3 (1%)
I'm not sure yet	204 (35%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>582 (100%)</b>

Table 12 shows the work settings of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are unsure if they will return to work as a pharmacy professional. Among respondents, community pharmacy (34%) and secondary care (18%) were the most common settings, with a further 35% being unsure which setting. The other settings and multiple settings are discussed above under Table 10 and Table 11.

## Next steps

We would like to thank everyone on the temporary register who completed the survey; their responses have given us a very helpful insight into their plans to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will share this report with key stakeholders and make an adapted version available on our website. We hope it will be helpful for everyone involved in workforce planning and deployment for pharmacy professionals in Great Britain during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will discuss these findings with stakeholders and consider if we need to take any further steps, including whether it would be helpful to carry out the survey again at a later point.