



PHARMACY TECHNICIAN JOURNAL

Journal of the Association of
Pharmacy Technicians United Kingdom

SUMMER 2021



**Celebrating 10 years of
Pharmacy Technician Registration**

• Introductions • Celebrations • Climate Crisis



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Meet the Executive Committee

Website Update - www.aptuk.org

If everything has gone to plan, by the time you read this application for membership and payment via the website will be up and running.

It has been a more complex job than initially anticipated as, like most things in pharmacy, we have so many variables! For example, the new application for membership system will have an automatic look-up to the GPhC register however, pharmacy technicians in Northern Ireland would not have a GPhC number but would still be eligible to join etc. We have had to set in place systems to support these variations and test the system through all the options. Although it has taken a little longer to implement, the system we will have will meet many more of our needs and include more, time and money saving, automation.

The new website has been live for a few months now and has been well received. We have continued to increase visits to our website. The stats for the website can be viewed in the table below and are in relation to the first half of the year in both 2020 and 2021.

Year	Average visits Jan-Jun	Average pages viewed Jan-Jun	Average learning completed Jan-Jun
2020	14358	5582	52
2021	16402	6015	72



In my post as Director of Digital Strategy, I will be leading on a programme of continued improvements. This will include improvements to the landing page and better use of images as a starting point.

I encourage you all to log into the website and take a look around.

The website is part of ongoing investment for our members. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact us.



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Strength and Durability

Welcome to the summer edition.

In July pharmacy technicians across Great Britain celebrated 10 years of being a registered profession. In marriage terms the traditional 10th-anniversary is Tin, symbolising strength and durability that's stood the test of time. The articles submitted for this edition demonstrate the strength and durability our pharmacy technicians have. The branch network is going from strength to strength with an All Wales branch launched. But it's not all about new branches, the Kent branch was launched over 20 years ago, demonstrating durability within the network. You can read more about these branches in the branch network update on page 9.

The updated webpage is also being made more durable, with the addition of flexible payment options. On page 3 Gail tells us some of the challenges our complex profession has given her during the process and how these have been overcome to make joining more streamlined by creating a link to the GPhC register.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) team have been strengthened. Shamma Baig has joined as EDI executive. You can get to know Shamma and read the EDI feature on page 10. Shamma joins a new APTUK structure and fully staffed executive team which was formally launched on 1st July 2021. Each of the team have shared a short bio and a selfie to introduce themselves. Hopefully in this digital world that we are living in this will make you feel we are not strangers and that the new executive committee are visibly working to make APTUK strong and durable.

It's not only us who think pharmacy technician is a strong profession, read some of the comments the UK Chief

Pharmaceutical Officers said at an event held to celebrate our anniversary on page 7. They fully recognise and applaud the contribution and role expansion made over the last 10 years.

You, our members have sent us articles showing your strengths and how you have adapted and developed networks. Laura, page 11 needed to draw on her strengths when Covid-19 changed her work and home life, and describes how her training & experience as a pharmacy technician helped her through challenging times. Tracey and Claire's article, page 18 shares how they embraced technology and set up a robust networking group to the benefit of both educators and learners, to "ensure the effective development of training opportunities can be optimised in order to improve patient safety and care". The article on page 22 describes a "programme that brings communities and Community Pharmacy together to work in partnership to address the social determinants of health and health inequalities through locally based projects." It was a new concept to me and I hope you enjoy reading the article and consider how pharmacy technicians could be more involved. Climate change and the impacts that pharmacy have on it is another topic I feel I could learn more about. The article Pharmacy, Sustainability And Climate Change: What's It All About? includes a call for action asking us as health professionals to act. Tracey and Sam on page 22 tell us 'what's this got to do with pharmacy' and list some easy ideas you can consider. And to round up our members articles we virtually interviewed Helen who is the 'Meet the member' for summer.

I hope you enjoy some time over summer to relax and to read this edition. If you have been inspired to write an article please do get in touch I would love to hear from you.

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PTJ 2021 Timeline

Edition	Copy deadline
Autumn 2021	8th October 2021

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Author and reviewer guidelines

Full instructions are available online at www.aptuk.org.
Articles must be submitted electronically to editor@aptuk.org.
Authors are required to transfer copyright in their work to the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK.

Subscription available on request. For more information contact membership@aptuk.org



LIZ FIDLER FAPharmT – APTUK President
president@aptuk.org

President's Column

I am writing this on a very hot sunny day and starting to think about some leave, which is approaching. I hope that you too are about to or have had some leave. It's important that we take some time out to look after ourselves. The service you have provided to your patients and communities during the last 17 months is exemplary, but this feels more like a marathon than a sprint now! Self-care is needed more than ever.

I hope you were able to join us on our 10-year registration celebration event on 1st July 2021. If not, do not worry as you can access some of the pre-recorded videos on the website www.aptuk.org. It was so inspiring we also have a write up for you in this edition. Hearing from colleagues about what registration has meant and more importantly looking to the future.

You should have received, via email, our annual report 2020/21 – what a year! APTUK delivered for our members and the profession, but we are reliant on our members' support. Please do spread the word.

I saw a tweet recently about a pharmacy technician who started a new role and was feeling the day 1 nerves of a new job. Another APTUK member replied to the message and said look out for anyone wearing the APTUK badge, as they will support you. I think that sums up what membership means. For me it is a sense of professional pride and belonging. So please wear your badges with pride and support APTUK with

growing networks.

APTUK's work around equality and inclusivity has been on going and I am delighted that we are able to work with NHS England and Improvement and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society on our joint Inclusive Pharmacy Practice Plan. Delivering key sessions on the work we have undertaken during a webinar (hosted on RPS platform and available to members) and at the Roundtable on 29th July 2021. Information will be available on our EDI pages; we encourage you to get involved as we work collectively to make real sustainable change. There is much to do, but we as a leadership body embrace the opportunities to make a difference. Shamma Baig is leading the work with full executive committee support so please get in touch with her if you would like to get involved.

As your president, I will not stop championing the roles and how the profession stepped up and continues to. There is much more we can do as a profession and APTUK will continue to raise this at the highest levels. Please do continue to showcase your roles. My personal favourite section of the PTJ is reading the roles and difference our members make to patient care. As a profession we are not always shouting from the rooftops, but we must, our profession is going from strength to strength, and we need to let everyone know.

Wishing you a safe sunny summer.

Liz Fidler FAPharmT
President

APTUK Membership data 2016 - 2021

	Full Member	Fellow	Student/ Associate	Total
2016	855		279	1134
2020	1362	32	442	1836
2021	1503	32	582	2117



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CONSIDER IT DONE

Celebrating 10-years of Pharmacy Technician Professional Registration

The 1st of July 2021 was a milestone for pharmacy technicians in Great Britain who celebrated 10-years as a registered profession with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC).

This celebration was a key date on the annual calendar for the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK (APTUK). In better times, pre-pandemic, we would be celebrating in a glitzy hotel drinking champagne and of course the pharmacy technician tradition of being on the dance floor from the first record! However, we were determined not to let the pandemic dampen the achievements of pharmacy technicians and instead of a face-to-face event we planned an online evening to remember. Utilising our technology to the maximum, we designed an agenda for the evening to allow attendees to take some time out, listen and reflect on how far the profession has evolved. We were delighted that a number of key senior pharmacy leaders, pharmacy technicians and pre-registration pharmacy technicians (PTPTs) from across sectors were able to join us, sharing their reflections and aspirations.

In my opening speech I reflected on my experience of the day mandatory registration went live. I was at an APTUK event and remember the sense of pride in the room on that day. APTUK had been advocating for professional regulation of pharmacy technicians since its conception in 1952. Almost 70 years ago APTUK recognised that pharmacy technicians were integral to the delivery of patient services. No one could have predicted in 1952, or 2011, that the 10-year celebration would coincide with the biggest, global health crisis for over 100 years. During the global pandemic pharmacy technicians have stood proud, using their knowledge, skills and professionalism in innovative ways.

Duncan Rudkin, CEO and registrar from the GPhC, shared his reflections on the past 10 years and what the future may hold for the profession.

Duncan reflected on the profession's desire to do more by stating he recognised the profession was 'restless and ambitious' as well as recognising the contribution and role expansion over the years. I personally think that description articulates the passion and commitment demonstrated by so many we strengthen the role of pharmacy technicians as a

regulated healthcare professional.

In our first video presentation the contribution of pharmacy technicians, during the pandemic, was recognised by the Chief Pharmaceutical Officers (CPhOs) for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Please see the most memorable quotes.



Dr Keith Ridge CBE

'APTUK has been integral in raising the profile of pharmacy technicians. Nicole Hadland delivered the first Covid vaccine anywhere in the world to patients at the University Hospital Coventry. It's an exciting future for pharmacy technicians as pharmacy takes on more clinical roles, caring for patients in primary and secondary care settings.'

Alison Strath

'I am indebted to some of the pharmacy technicians who stepped up to deliver the vaccination programme. I am delighted to see a better recognition of the devolved nature of healthcare delivery within the introduction of regional representation for APTUK. My virtual front door is always open to you. Here's to the next 10 years!'

Cathy Harrison

'I am delighted and honoured to be speaking with you and supporting the APTUK who have been a driving force over the last decade. You have worked tirelessly across all sectors and demonstrated professional excellence competence and versatility. You can be rightly proud of your achievements. I am very committed to supporting the implementation of the Pharmacy Workforce review which makes specific commitment to professional registration in Northern Ireland.'



Following our first video showcase from the CPhOs the newly appointed APTUK Professional Leads for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland gave an overview of their commitment to the Association and their hopes for the future. You can read more about that on our website www.aptuk.org



The highlight of the evening was the showcase presentation videos from six pharmacy technicians who shared their professional journeys and aspirations for the future with us. First, we heard from Matt Rostron a PTPT from Royal Preston Hospital. Matt's enthusiasm for his training and role was infectious. Everyone wishes Matt all the best for his future career and registration.



Michelle Watson is a pharmacy technician with a varied career of both community and hospital pharmacy, who has a passion for research. Working as a

clinical trial coordinator at the University of York, Michelle is completing a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) pre-doctoral fellowship to compliment her masters degree in health research. Michelle is hoping to apply for a NIHR doctoral fellowship with a focus on developing the role of community pharmacy teams in research.



Victoria Horton works in a dual role in GP practice and supporting regional cross-sector training. Victoria has experience in community as a 'Saturday girl' and went on to train in hospital. Supporting pharmacy technicians in training and development is a passion for Victoria that she finds rewarding. Two years ago Victoria moved into a GP practice role supporting medicines reconciliation from discharge or outpatients, monitoring high-risk medicines and patient medication reviews to name just a few of the tasks.

community and hospital pharmacy services and in most of his career he has been in a cytotoxic and parenteral nutrition aseptic unit. Phil reflected on the recognition having a protected title gives him, his managers and his employer with added assurance and confidence. Aspirations for the future are to improve the education and training of pharmacy technicians especially in the sphere of technical services.



Kaylee Harwood is a pharmacy technician specialising in mental health. Kaylee started her pharmacy career as a counter assistant and dispenser in community. She registered in October 2020 and now works in a dispensary in a mental health trust. She has undertaken accreditations in Accuracy Checking Pharmacy Technician (ACPT), Medicine Management, Edward Jenner NHS leadership skills and psych-1 course with the College of Mental Health Pharmacy. Being registered means that she can do what she loves with improved regulated safety for colleagues and patients and can access a huge array of support from the likes of peers and colleagues and APTUK.

providing support to the pharmacy team. Nancy is involved in many of the services provided at the pharmacy and gains knowledge every day. Nancy can provide support to colleagues and feels that she can be trusted to provide information from her professional status and role as a pharmacy technician. Nancy is enjoying every aspect of her role and developing her skills. She loves helping patients and hopes that pharmacy technicians will be offered more opportunities with Patient Group Direction (PGDs).

It was a privilege to listen to the experience of our pharmacy technician presenters and we cannot thank them enough for taking the time to share with us all their varied career pathways.

Ellen Williams, APTUK Vice President gave an overview of the work undertaken on the professions behalf, this is expanded upon in our Annual Report 2020/21 which has been published and shared with members.

We are so proud of our profession and look forward to the next 10-years and what the future holds for us...join us.

If you weren't able to join us, the video presentations are available on our website <https://www.aptuk.org/>



Philip Jones works in technical services and in the pharmacy workforce team in the south. Phil has been in both



Nancy Anagor is a pharmacy technician who has been on the register since the 1st March 2021. Nancy works in community pharmacy for Lloyds. Nancy describes the effect of the training and the confidence this gave her in advising patients and



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Branch Network Update

Since the last PTJ the branches have continued to be very busy.

A virtual branch committee meeting took place on 15th May which gave us the opportunity to welcome our new branch committees, formally launch the new branch handbook and included a fantastic session from Gail Hall to get everyone up to speed with effective use of MS Teams and Sharepoint.

In the last edition we welcomed four new branches and I'm delighted to say that we now also have a branch in Wales

and plans are in full swing for the launch of a branch in the North West of England in the Autumn.

The branches helped APTUK to celebrate the 10th anniversary of registration as a profession on 1st July 2021 with lots of social media activity, showcasing the amazing work being done by pharmacy technicians in their areas.

This month we catch-up with both one of our oldest branches in Kent and our new branch in Wales.



KATHERINE WATKINSON
MPharmT

APTUK Branch Liaison Officer
branchliaison@aptuk.org



Sue Jones
MPharmT
Branch Chair

KENT

Kent branch originally launched back in September 2001. The first branch to be launched in Kent. At the time the branch was meeting every 3 months and was alternating between central locations. There were some familiar names on the attendance lists from that decade including myself, former President of APTUK Tess Fenn and Liz Fidler, our current President!

The branch relaunched back in 2015. The Kent branch covers the postcode areas of BR, CT, DA, ME and TN. If you fall just outside of this, still get in touch as we'd love to hear from you and we can signpost you to your nearest branch if it isn't us.

During 2020 the branch committee kept in touch virtually. We held our first virtual branch meeting on 13th May 2021. The aim of the meeting was for local pharmacy technicians to meet the committee as there had been changes recently. We also wanted any new members or first timers to understand the role of APTUK, so we invited Katherine along to provide a National APTUK update.

We also decided to show case the various roles of pharmacy technicians in and around Kent.

Our guest speakers were -

Helen Gisby - Pharmacy Technician Specialist, Medicines Information & Education

Stevie Sarich - Regional Pharmacy Support and Training, Paydens

Gemma Rolph - Primary Care Pharmacy Technician and Community Education

Emily Hunnisett - Governance Pharmacy Technician

The Teams chat box was busy throughout the evening! It was agreed that the guest speakers had fascinating roles and were inspirational. It certainly made us all feel proud to be pharmacy technicians. We had good local engagement with different sectors mixing and learning from each other.

We all felt that the meeting went well with some pharmacy technicians attending who we had not met before. It seemed that holding a virtual meeting increased attendance. We also had good attendance from pre-registration pharmacy technicians. After the meeting we asked for feedback from all attendees.

To find out how to join Kent Branch and information about our next meeting, please contact kentbranch@aptuk.org



Emily Guerin
MPharmT
Branch Chair

ALL WALES

What prompted the start of the APTUK Wales Branch?

I always wanted to belong to an APTUK Branch but there wasn't one locally I could join. I'd been thinking about setting up a branch for some time and I spoke with Katherine, branch liaison officer, she put me in touch with likeminded pharmacy technicians who were keen to launch a branch too. However, geographically we were in completely different parts of Wales. Now that we are in more of a virtual world it made sense to have an All Wales virtual branch which pharmacy technicians in Wales could access. So that's what we did.

Who is on the branch committee?

We currently have a small committee; Emily Guerin APTUK Wales Chairperson and Julie Mathieson joins us as Branch Secretary. We are also joined by committee members Dafydd James and Geraint Young. Dafydd has recently joined the APTUK board as membership director and Geraint Young is the Professional Lead for Wales. Both bring extensive experience and I am so pleased to have them on the committee.

Following the launch of APTUK Wales branch we had so many pharmacy technicians interested in joining us that we held a meet and greet discussing the various roles available, so we shall be expanding our committee very soon, watch this space.

What were the highlights of the first APTUK Wales Branch meeting?

There were so many- from Ellen Williams APTUK Vice president taking us through APTUK's response to the pandemic, Wendy Penny HEIW discussed learning opportunities for pre and post registration pharmacy technicians. Elen Jones Director for Wales at RPS also joined us and spoke about how well both professions had worked together throughout the pandemic.

For me, I was just pleased to see members come together to network and support an APTUK branch in Wales. A truly inspirational evening with a fantastic turnout, I can't wait for the next one!

For more information about the Wales Branch contact walesbranch@aptuk.org

Follow all APTUK activities on social media:
Twitter - @APTUK1 Facebook - APTUK1

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI)

Welcome to the EDI pages. In this new, regular section of the Pharmacy Technician Journal we aim to update members with the APTUK ongoing commitment to their EDI agenda. We also hope these pages will be used to showcase good practice and the EDI work of our members.



In the Spring edition of the PTJ¹ we introduced our members to the joint work with NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) on Inclusive Pharmacy Practice (IPPP).

This work continues to be a focus for the Executive Committee at APTUK as we prepare for the second roundtable event on the 29th July 2021.

In June 2021, a survey was sent to all GPhC registrants evaluating the Joint National Plan for Inclusive Pharmacy Practice in England. This email was also sent to members from APTUK and over 600 of our members clicked into the survey from our email. This was a great response from pharmacy technicians and the survey data is being analysed by NHSE/I now.

Theme 1: Leadership and Representation

Our focus for this key theme of the Joint National Plan² was to collect baseline data from our members. This data was collected from 213 of our members and is currently being analysed.

Liz, APTUK President, chaired the 6th July 2021 webinar where the three partners reported on their progress against the outcomes for Theme 1. The objectives for APTUK towards Theme 1 in the next six-months will be covered in the section where we introduce our colleague Shamma Baig.

Theme 2: Professional Education and Training

The APTUK project proposal for this theme, to identify and signpost to training supporting cultural competence for pharmacy, is now underway. This is being collaboratively developed with RPS and HEE as part of the IPPP. Once ready, this will be published on the APTUK website.

The aspiration is to share this at the roundtable event on 29th July 2021.

Theme 3: Healthcare and Service Delivery

At the time of going to print the work

is still ongoing by Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) working with partners to develop a resource pack to support pharmacy to:

1. Better understand and interpret local population health data on health inequalities.
2. Better engage and work with diverse communities to design culturally competent and tailored approaches to healthcare delivery.



The APTUK Board are delighted to welcome Shamma Baig – MPharmT, to the Executive Committee as EDI Executive. Shamma brings a wealth of experience, and the following interview to introduce you all to Shamma.

Tell us a bit about your experience as a pharmacy technician

I think I am very fortunate to have experience from community, secondary and primary care sectors of pharmacy. My career in pharmacy started over 17 years ago when I was a “Saturday Girl” at Lloyds Pharmacy. I went onto train as a pharmacy technician in secondary care. With such exposure to lots of specialism and a breadth of experience within the hospital setting, I chose to specialise in Aseptic and Cancer Services. I specialised in this very rewarding sector for almost 4 years and then moved onto a new challenge in Primary Care. I currently work as a Falls Pharmacy Technician in a very niche role, specialising in the frailty and older persons’ care. I hope

my experience inspires other pharmacy technicians to explore avenues in all sectors of pharmacy.

What attracted you to apply for the post of EDI Executive with APTUK?

I applied because currently I am searching for new challenges in my career as a pharmacy technician. As APTUK operate on a volunteer basis, and I was seeking new challenges, I thought it was time to give something back to the profession. I am very honoured and proud of being part of such an amazing organisation.

Can you tell our members more about the APTUK outcomes for Theme 1 of the Joint National Plan² and how they can get involved?

As part of the Joint National Plan Theme 1 initiative, I will firstly work on comprising a calendar of dates for us all to celebrate, commemorate and respect all religious occasions, commemorative and reflective events and those dates to celebrate with happiness. My aim is that the core foundations of equality, diversity and inclusion resonate amongst our profession and we become leading EDI champions as a profession, paving the way for others to follow. Although this is in its inception, I would encourage all our members to join our EDI allyship initiative. Allyship will provide a platform for us all to learn from each other’s practices, cement the EDI values of APTUK and aim to improve and promote an EDI compliant profession.

How can members get involved?

We can all get involved by practicing excellent EDI values in our professional environments and everyday lives. All our members can be EDI experts, whereby we all work to be inclusive of all, work together in ways to respect diversity and fundamentally be equal in our dealings towards all. We can aim to express EDI values both consciously and unconsciously, so it becomes second nature to us. You can contact me about any EDI comments, questions or queries

on EDI@APTUK.org. Please look out for the EDI pages on our website for updates <https://www.aptuk.org/about/EDI>. Further information about the EDI national initiative can be found through signing up to the FutureNHS Collaboration Platform www.future.nhs.uk to follow The Joint National Plan² developments. Make sure you are receiving emails from APTUK. Here we will communicate on our outcomes and requests for support. If you are not receiving email from us, as a member, and wish to please contact membership@aptuk.org to troubleshoot any issues. If you have any further comments or suggestions for these EDI pages, please contact us.

REFERENCES:

1. *Pharmacy Technician Journal. Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity. Spring 2021.*
2. *APTUK, NHSEI, RPS. Joint National Plan for Inclusive Pharmacy Practice in England. March 2021.*



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How The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Impacted My Practice

Current role

I started out working in community pharmacy, making the transition to general practice almost 20 years ago in a dispensing practice. Eventually I moved to a medicines management role and joined my current practice team (now a super-partnership) 10 years ago. In my usual role as clinical quality and research manager most of my role is 'back office'. I act as clinical trials coordinator and lead the team who work on patient recall and chronic disease management. At the start of the pandemic the latter took something of a back seat as clinical trials were launched to find effective treatments and vaccines for COVID-19. We quickly became one of the fastest recruiting sites in the country to the Principle trial, a UK-wide study run by Oxford University testing different medicines for COVID-19 at home.

Impact of Covid-19 on my practice

At the start of the pandemic a community pharmacy attached to one of our practice sites was really struggling to meet demand with a number of staff isolating. I volunteered to help out for a few hours and really enjoyed stepping back in to the dispensary.

Towards the end of 2020 our primary care network was asked to prepare to deliver an unprecedented campaign to vaccinate our registered population against COVID-19. I have always been very involved in designing and running our influenza vaccination clinics and having changed our delivery model for flu vaccinations last year to enable safe socially distanced clinics, we had had something of a practice run. However there were some significant challenges ahead.

My input running a vaccination clinic

These were brand new vaccines, in some cases requiring dilution and careful storage and preparation. Staff would have to use a data and booking system that they are unfamiliar with. It also meant all staff involved in the clinics would need to complete hours of training and we would need to implement dozens of standard operating procedures and protocols. There would be multiple quality and readiness inspections and phone calls before we could even open our doors. One of our GPs was appointed as clinical lead and I was appointed operational lead.

Fortunately one of our practice sites is next to a civic hall which was transformed in to a clinic which has the capacity to receive up to 1500 patients per day. This opportunity allowed me to draw on my experience as a registered pharmacy technician and I have really enjoyed utilising my skills to plan and help deliver clinics, particularly vaccine preparation. I have also helped with data entry, checking patients in at the door and have trained as a vaccinator. Doing some patient facing work for the first time in a number of years has been fantastic.

We have recently closed our vaccination centre to focus on catching up with routine care. As autumn approaches we expect to be delivering a combined influenza and COVID-19 vaccination campaign

The Personal Impact of Covid-19

Shortly after we ran our first clinics my son contracted COVID-19 at school and passed it on to myself and my husband. Fortunately I had received the vaccine 10 days before I tested positive. I think this resulted in my symptoms being less severe. However my husband was hospitalised with pneumonia which was a very stressful time for our family. Fortunately we all made a speedy full recovery.

Although the last 6 months have been very challenging personally and professionally I am really proud of the part I have played in the care of our community through the pandemic. Whatever role I find myself in, my training and experience as a pharmacy technician has underpinned everything I have done.



LAURA BERESFORD MAPharmT MBPsS
Clinical Quality & Research Manager
Middlewood partnership

Board of Directors and Execu



Liz Fidler - President

Liz has worked across various sectors of pharmacy and is a leader in driving forward pharmacy technician development. Liz has led the development of a new Pharmacy Technician qualification to meet the recently refreshed regulatory standards and chaired the working group review of the National Occupational Standards.

Whilst Association Pharmacy Technician UK Education Officer, Liz led the development of the APTUK Foundation Pharmacy Technician Framework and resources.

In her current role of Associate Dean – Quality for Health Education England working across Kent, Surrey and Sussex, she is responsible for quality management and enhancement and works in partnership with Heads of School, trainees, professional regulators, NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure the clinical learning environment is a safe and effective place to undertake education.

Previously Liz held the post of Health Education England (London and South East) Interim Pharmacy Dean and Associate Head of Pharmacy where she was responsible for leading and supporting pharmacy workforce development and education across the region.

Liz received an Association of Pharmacy Technician UK Fellowship and won the APTUK/AAH Pharmacy Technician of the Year – Outstanding Contribution in 2017.



Ellen Williams - Vice President

Ellen is Vice President and a Fellow of the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK. Ellen is a passionate advocate for the pharmacy technician profession who champions the important role they play in the Medicines Optimisation and the wider healthcare agenda, raising the profile of the profession and ensuring the knowledge, skills and potential of this workforce are recognised and fully utilised across all sectors of pharmacy.

Ellen has worked in many areas of pharmacy before going on to specialise in pharmacy education and training. Ellen has led on the development and delivery of post registration pharmacy accreditation programmes across the South and has been responsible for leading national steering groups in the development of frameworks including the NHS Pharmacy Education and Development Committee commissioned 'National Framework for the Assessment of Medicines Management Skills' and the Aseptic Services Accreditation Group 'National Framework for the Assessment of Product Approval under section 10 exemption'. Ellen also co-chaired the development of a new qualification to meet the 2017 revised regulatory standards.

Ellen is Director of Regional Pharmacy Training at Pharmacy Workforce Development South (PWDS), where she leads a team responsible for pharmacy workforce development, and the design and delivery of innovative pharmacy education and training programmes.



Gail Hall - Director of Digital Strategy

Gail has been a pharmacy technician for over 30 years. Working initially within aseptic services in the NHS and then in education roles within a FE College, HM Prison Service and private training provider.

A qualified assessor, internal and external verifier, teacher (QTLS) and with a Master of Education in information and communication technology Gail has always had an interest in education and development, and specifically the use of technology enhanced learning. She is currently completing a doctorate in clinical education at the University of Leeds, with a focus on the selection of peers in pharmacy practice and is passionate about post-registration development for pharmacy technicians. Employed as the Course Development Lead at Buttercups Training, Gail leads on the development of post-registration programmes for pharmacy technicians.

Gail has been an active member of APTUK since 2004, involved in local branches and a Board member since 2017. Gail has a desire to continue to support the pharmacy technician profession through the professional leadership body. The Director of Digital Strategy post will enable Gail to investigate and apply the use of appropriate technology to support the executive committee and members as the profession moves forward, into a post-Covid world.

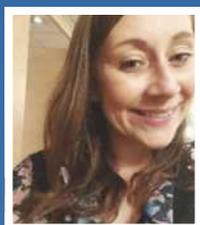


Dafydd James - Membership Director

Dafydd works as a Regional Lead Technician for the Renal Medicines Service in Southwest Wales where he has been instrumental in the digitisation of the service including implementation of electronic prescribing. APTUK recognised his work, and he was awarded the Digital Innovation Award in 2017. He is now working on making these services available for Wales.

As a Membership Director Dafydd is looking forward to volunteering his time, knowledge and skills to lead on membership and engagement to take them to the next level.

Executive Committee biographies



Amy Laffin - Director of Education

Amy has worked in Pharmacy for 15 years and has had the pleasure of working in various pharmacy sectors in this time. Amy now works in academia where she is able to watch and support the next generation of Pharmacy staff including Pharmacy assistants, Pharmacy Technicians and Science manufacturing Technicians grow in their roles.

Amy has a passion not only for education but also for supporting the professional membership body (APTUK) and so the role of Director for Education will enable her to embrace both areas as well as offer her time and commitment to the continual positive changes within pharmacy technician education and the profession.



Vicky Hope - Operations Lead

Vicky's background is founded on a business studies degree and throughout her career she has gained extensive commercial operational experience including customer/client service, process development and implementation, marketing and team leadership, primarily in service orientated businesses. For the last 10 years Vicky has been working in the healthcare arena, which has provided a keen interest in the rapidly changing patient care landscape

Vicky works as the Operations Lead for APTUK, the purpose of which is to oversee the leadership and management of APTUK's professional business operations and to support the development and setting of the strategic direction, including key objectives, priorities, and goals.



Lynn All - Membership Coordinator and Secretariat

Lynn has worked as the Membership Coordinator for APTUK for the last 5 years, since taking early retirement. Lynn worked initially as a community Pharmacy Technician for a large multiple pharmacy chain, & later worked as the Area Pharmacy Administrator, covering 50 stores, with the same company, completing 38 years in total within community pharmacy.

Lynn has been a career long supporter of APTUK – joining as a student member and was an early registrant with the GPhC 10 years ago.

With the exciting changes to the leadership structure within APTUK & the significant investment in the website, to automate some of the manual tasks around membership, Lynn's role is evolving. Going forwards Lynn will work as part of the newly formed Executive Committee, supporting it in a variety of ways, whilst still maintaining her focus on helping members with all queries around their membership payments & website access.

Lynn is looking forward to the new way of working & interacting with as many members as possible.



Warren Francis - Professional Lead, Northern Ireland

Warren has worked in pharmacy for over 20 years, both in community and in hospital. He now specialises in Pharmacy ICT and robotics and works as a Senior Analyst for the encompass pharmacy build team, who are introducing a digital integrated care record across health and social care. This will replace many of the paper based or outdated technology systems used by all Trusts in Northern Ireland and is anticipated to transform the way people are cared for in the region.

Warren began working as a volunteer for APTUK in 2019 as the NI National Officer, to help bring regulatory change to enable the same career opportunities as pharmacy technicians across the rest of the UK, as a result of being recognised as a registered profession.

The foundations have been put in place that will now allow registration to become a reality in NI over the next few years and it is this potential that continues to motivate Warren in his new post as APTUK Professional Lead for Northern Ireland.



Geraint Young - Professional Lead, Wales

Geraint is based in North Wales and works as a Senior Pharmacy Technician in a Primary Care Medicines Management team. He qualified as a Pharmacy Technician in 2008, and has since held various roles in Wales, with experience in Medicines Management, Technical Services, Community Pharmacy and Primary Care.

Geraint became the APTUK Professional Lead for Wales in 2021. He has held the post of Interim Lead for Wales since 2020 and represents APTUK as a non-executive member of the delivery board for Pharmacy Delivering a Healthier Wales. Before this, he represented APTUK as a National Officer under the Frameworks work stream.

Board of Directors and Executive



Claire Steele - Professional Lead, Scotland

Claire Steele has practiced as a pharmacy technician for 23 years and has enjoyed a varied career from community to hospital pharmacy across England and Scotland. She is currently the Pharmacy Operations Manager for the NHS Fife Acute Pharmacy Service, leading a 70+ strong team of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy support workers and procurement officers to deliver pharmacy technical services across NHS Fife. Claire is a strong advocate for pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff and is honoured to be the Professional Secretary of the National Pharmacy Technician Group Scotland. As a pharmacy technician leader, she believes it is important to support the professional leadership body APTUK, ensuring pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff are represented at the highest level and that best practice and knowledge is shared across the United Kingdom.



Kay Morgan - Editor

Kay has worked as a pharmacy technician since leaving school, initially in hospital pharmacy. Since 2015 Kay's role has been NHS Board wide, employed as Learning and Development Facilitator. This has provided opportunity to gain a wider understanding of pharmacy across all sectors. Kay is an advocate for staff development and was nominated by her colleagues for an APTUK Fellowship in 2018.

Kay leads on the production of the Pharmacy Technicians Journal (PTJ), providing members with an authoritative and informative source of information. She brings to the role a logical thought process, along with her ability to work to SOPs, meet deadlines and an attention to detail. This includes working with various APTUK officers to share developments they are involved in, writing content, reviewing articles, as well as liaising with finance & business officer to ensure all PTJ processes are followed.

Kay gets great job satisfaction from the initial planning through to the publication of each edition and gains pleasure encouraging and supporting pharmacy technicians to share their stories and good practice. She believes that the PTJ is a great format to share members views and connect with other pharmacy professionals. Kay is continually pleasantly surprised with the quality and range of pieces members submit.



Katherine Watkinson - Branch Liaison Executive

Katherine began her career in hospital pharmacy before moving into mental health roles. She has worked in various roles at hospitals across England and is now based in the Midlands.

Katherine currently has a portfolio career which includes working with Turning Point as their Acting Head of Medicines Management & Pharmacy, a very varied role which involves supporting the substance misuse, learning disability, mental health, and public health services. Katherine has also recently begun working with ProPharmace developing and delivering training programmes to pharmacy professionals. In addition, Katherine sits as part of the GPhC Investigating Committee as a registrant member.

Katherine has been a member of APTUK since qualifying as a pharmacy technician and has always been committed to supporting the association. She was APTUK treasurer for 3 years before taking some time away from a formal national role to support her local branch and other professional commitments. She is passionate about the role of the professional leadership body in supporting the development of the profession and assisting members to develop their own careers.

Katherine believes that the branches are the backbone of APTUK and vital to provide the support that members need; she is delighted to be able to develop and support the branches to make them accessible to all members.



Andrea Ashton - Social Media Executive

Andrea began her pharmacy career in 1985 and has gained a wealth of experience in hospital pharmacy and regional roles, which include dispensary and supply services; ward-based medicines management services, aseptic, radiopharmacy and non-sterile manufacturing, clinical trials and education and training. Andrea is currently the Assistant Director of Pharmacy (Technical Services) at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Andrea has held a number of positions with APTUK (Director of Communications and Events National Officer) and is continuing in the role of Social Media Executive. Andrea is passionate about the profession and all that Pharmacy Technicians contribute to patient care and the pharmacy team. She is proud to be able to continue to support APTUK, promoting and communicating the work the professional leadership body do on behalf of pharmacy technicians and advocating their diverse and advancing role within the profession.

Committee biographies - continued



Shamma Baig - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead

As APTUK approaches 10 years as a registered profession, Shamma is also approaching 10 years as a registered Pharmacy Technician. Shamma has a wealth of experience in secondary, primary and community pharmacy settings, including specialist experience in medicines optimisation, cancer services and aseptic preparation. Currently she works in the primary care sector with work streams based on falls and frailty.

Shamma has recently volunteered for the EDI Lead role. This is a new and innovative role within the organisation. Shamma hopes to facilitate and promote the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the pharmacy technician workforce across the UK.



Oliver Jones - Business Development Executive

Having worked in community pharmacy since a teenager, Oliver joined the register as a pharmacy technician in 2014. His career since then has led him into primary care, and more recently academia – working as an education supervisor at The Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education. Alongside the ‘day job’ Oliver has been volunteering for APTUK in a business development role. Oliver believes that it is important for a profession such as APTUK to have a strong professional leadership body and he is proud to give his time working to ensure APTUK is able to provide that leadership.



Pharmacy, Sustainability And Climate Change: What's It All About?

Why sustainability is important

We are in a state of climate & ecological emergency and its effects are causing sickness and mortality. Despite our recent experience with the Covid pandemic, the climate crisis must be considered as the greatest health threat of modern times.

The emergency is a result of the burning of fossil fuels, releasing carbon dioxide (CO2) and other 'warming gases' and effectively creating a 'greenhouse' effect which has destabilised our environment. Other human activity like deforestation and industrial agriculture has weakened the natural life-support systems that would have otherwise protected us.

Governments around the world now acknowledge that the environmental damage caused by global warming and biodiversity loss have led to an 'existential threat to nature, people, prosperity and security.'¹

It is anticipated that by 2045 that a lack of sufficient drinking water will be a threat to life in the UK² and yet by 2050 (less than three decades from now), many British hospitals and homes will be situated in flood zones as a result of rising sea levels caused by climate change³. Fossil fuel air pollution has been linked to 1 in 5 of all deaths globally (around 8 million people annually), causing respiratory and cardiac illness, depression and miscarriage.⁴

What's this got to do with pharmacy?

Health services face a formidable challenge in the face of the climate crisis, but surprisingly are also partly responsible for contributing to it. Our healthcare system is responsible for an estimated 4-5% of the country's carbon footprint (the amount of

CO2 and other emissions it is accountable for), with medicines representing 25% of that figure.⁵ (Globally, healthcare contributes more to carbon emissions than the aviation industry!⁶)

The NHS has set out targets for achieving Net Zero carbon-emissions and pharmacy professionals will be critical to those accomplishments. We must establish ways of delivering services now that will not have a detrimental effect on our future.

Some pharmaceutical products have already been identified as 'high-carbon': anaesthetic gases (such as desflurane and nitrogen dioxide) and pressurised metered dose inhalers (pMDIs). The anaesthetic gases and gas propellants inside the inhalers have a high Global Warming Potential (GWP) and can remain in the atmosphere for many years. The NHS will shortly start to monitor how many of these items are used and will be seeking input from staff on ways in which to care for patients, protect their health and still lower the quantities dispensed. Much work will be needed: pMDIs account for 70% of inhalers prescribed in the UK and are responsible 4% of the NHS' total carbon footprint! Dry Powder Inhaler (DPI) alternatives have a much lower carbon-footprint but the patient's clinical need must always be remembered. Changes must be undertaken by clinical staff who understand medicines and how to help patients use them properly.

We also need to focus on the ways in which we deliver pharmacy services: are they uneconomical of time, energy or other resources? Are we creating large volumes of pharmaceutical waste and is it being disposed of correctly? Pharmacy technicians have already contributed to 'green pharmacy' programmes even if historically they've been badged under a different name: by ensuring proper stock control (less expired, wasted medicines), disposing of waste correctly, recycling, undertaking medicines reconciliation (better healthcare, shorter hospital stay, fewer resources used), patient education (fewer side-effects, better health outcomes, fewer GP appointments needed), turning the lights off... the list goes on! As time progresses there will be an increased need for healthcare and a greater burden on our health system infrastructure so we'll need creative pharmacy minds to develop efficient ways of providing care that doesn't contaminate or damage our environment.

Call to action

As health professionals committed to preventing human suffering we have to act.

Ask yourself what you can do to prevent an exacerbation of climate change. Very simple acts such as committing to "meat-free Mondays", changing your bank, refusing single use plastic or taking fewer car journeys can soon develop into significant contributions. We have to remember that as health professionals we hold an amazing social platform of public trust and our actions are powerful examples of leadership. Every incremental change we adopt helps work towards achieving a greener, safer tomorrow for us and future generations.

Working together as pharmacy professionals we can:

- Act as sustainability champions and use our professional standing to spread the message
- Raise it as an important topic wherever you work, whoever you are and whatever you do
- Join a green network e.g. Pharmacy Declares!
- Call on your professional organisations to declare a climate emergency (as the UKCPA have).



The final point that we would like to leave you with is an understanding that pharmacy technicians are absolutely crucial to delivering on this important agenda and no single person is too inexperienced or too junior to make a difference. Our health system wants every single one of its 1.3 million staff members to help deliver a 'Greener NHS' and this has to include pharmacy technicians – we can make a difference, so let's start today and pledge to make pharmacy as green as it can possibly be.

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APTUK Membership information

CURRENT FEES

To join APTUK follow this link:
www.aptuk.org/about-us/join-aptuk/

The current annual fees are
Full £60
Early Years £60 for 18 months
Trainees are FREE of charge

Please ensure you have amended your standing order, direct debits will be updated to any new fees

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Please inform Lynn Ali, the Membership Coordinator if you have recently changed any of the following details or if you are not sure that we hold your current details:

- Email?
- Address?
- Home or mobile telephone?
- Sector of work?

APTUK WEBSITE MEMBERS ONLY AREA

Please ensure you have access to the member's area to receive electronic journals and find details of other benefits of membership.

To request a username and password, please contact Lynn Ali, The Membership Coordinator.

APTUK JOURNAL

Four editions of the journal are printed and posted to all full and fellow members. Editions are also available electronically via the member's area on the APTUK website.

All members, including trainees can access previous and current editions via the member's only area.

To discuss sharing your work in the journal, contact: editor@aptuk.org

#membershipmatters #joinus #supportustosupport

Contact details for Lynn Ali – APTUK Membership Coordinator

Email: membership@aptuk.org

Effective Networking in Pharmacy Education: Embracing the Pandemic

Background

In March 2020 when the world closed due to the pandemic, a group of like-minded pharmacy technician educational programme directors (EPDs) within their respective acute trusts across Kent, Surrey and Sussex decided to set up a networking group to replace the face to face educational meetings routinely organised by the Health Education England London, Kent, Surrey, and Sussex (LKSS) Pharmacy Team to support and guide EPD's.

Tracy Hedley, Clare Williams, Sue Jones, Helen Gisby, Suzi Hawthorn, Jenny Stevens, Nicola Arnold and Chloe Bolt collaborated to form a regional EPD Network Group to provide professional and wellbeing support to each other. All the EPDs had enough experience to realise their role can at times feel quite isolated so it would be important during the pandemic particularly to have a network for sharing information, ideas and continue development in order to provide continuity for their trainees in addition to a wellbeing check-in with supportive peers who understand the challenges of the professional role.

With the launch of the new Level 3 Diploma for the Principles and Practice of Pharmacy Technicians in February 2020, the EPDs were determined not to let the pandemic negatively impact themselves or the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians (PTPT) in their care. They did recognise that they would need to be adaptable and innovative to provide some form of continuity as best as possible with the emphasis on patient-centred care which could ultimately be optimised. Working collaboratively gave the EPDs a safe space to find and provide support for each other and discuss ideas.

The inaugural meeting took place in May 2020, led by Nicola via Zoom, where an idea to develop monthly virtual training sessions for PTPTs was suggested by Clare. The notion evolved into an exciting programme of training and inter-professional integrated learning across multiple pharmacy sectors. The learning sessions would be an opportunity to help PTPTs build their own supportive networks with their peer group across the region whilst learning useful information to compliment the underpinning knowledge delivered more formally by the education providers.

Planning & challenges

Being educationalists, the group couldn't resist a bit of brainstorming to identify suitable topics for learning sessions, and the training needs analysis was born. It was unanimously agreed that sessions would be focussed on practice based professional skills, knowledge and behaviours providing PTPTs with the opportunity to reflect on their own performance and practice against the GPhC Professional Standards. To pilot the idea the following topics were chosen to coincide with the September cohort of trainees' induction and each were to be delivered by one of the EPDs as experts in their respective topics:

- Professional standards
- Pharmacy calculations
- Introduction to APTUK
- Medicines information resources
- Patient group directions (PGD)
- CPD & revalidation
- Resilience

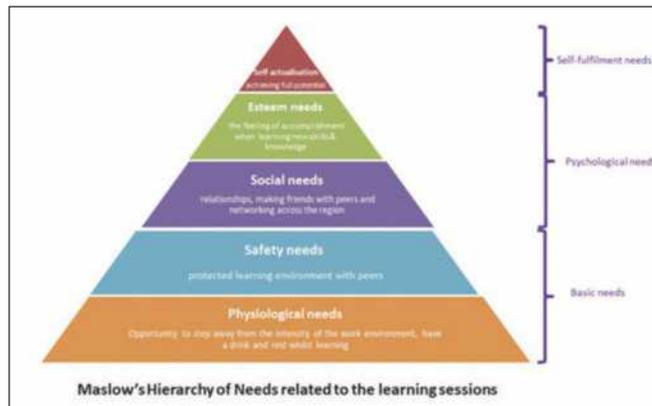
Feedback from PTPTs about the value of the sessions was collated by Jenny Stevens. Having this information gave the EPDs an opportunity to evaluate the appropriateness

of dedicating protected time for shared learning during the increased workload pressures associated with the pandemic.

Pilot

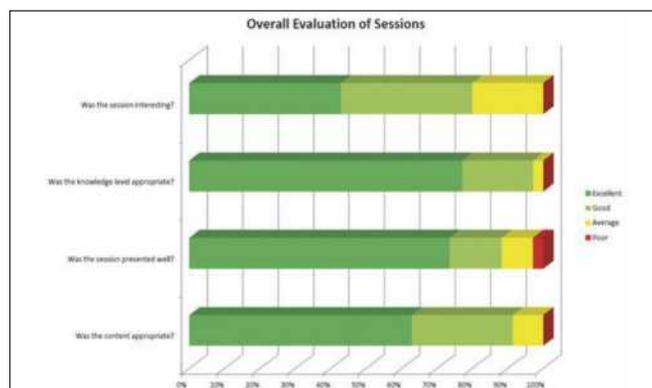
As all of the acute hospitals were under extreme pressure during the first wave of the lockdown, it was decided to run the first virtual meeting via MS Teams at a time that had the least impact on the delivery of patient care and ensured that trainees from all college cohorts would not be otherwise committed to a college study day. The first session was delivered by Chloe who delivered a well received, interactive presentation about the GPhC Professional Standards. The attendance rate was high and feedback from trainees was very positive. The evaluation proved that the time invested was valued by the PTPTs and their practice supervisors alike. Having the opportunity for shared learning in a professional environment using a virtual platform was ideal for efficiency and inclusion. The pilot continued with monthly sessions delivered by each of the named EPDs. They supported each other with delivery and facilitation to keep the sessions professional and to time recognising the increased demands of each staff group to continue providing excellent patient care.

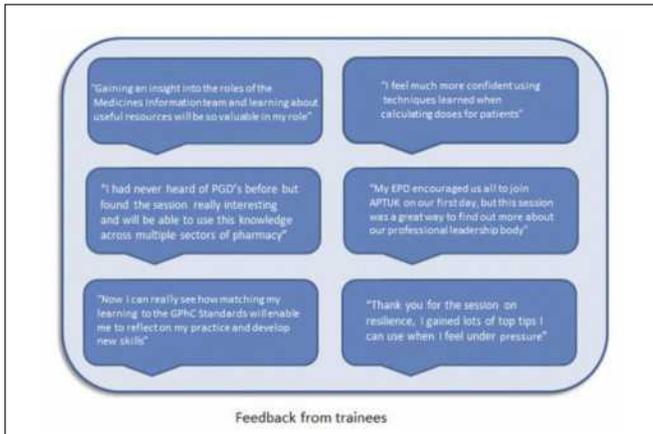
The EPDs felt that applying the principles of Maslow's Theory addressed the physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualisation needs of both the PTPTs and EPDs particularly during a time of increased pressure in the work environment.



Evaluation

Jenny continued to collate and evaluate the feedback using an online survey tool on behalf of the group. Overall results were very positive and demonstrated a need and desire for this structured learning to continue. Some examples of comments received and the results are detailed below.





Moving forward

In February 2021 when a new cohort of PTPTs started the Diploma apprenticeship, the network group evaluated the feedback and decided it would be beneficial for all to expand the selection of topics to meet the different needs of year 1 and year 2 trainees. A schedule was established specifically for each year group (see tables) and aligned to the trainees' professional and academic journeys with a greater focus on clinical topics and preparation for professional practice in the second year. The sessions are now always held on the second Tuesday of each month to provide consistency and an ability to plan well in advance. This uniformity helps practice supervisors and trainees record times when they will not be available to deliver patient services at the beginning of each rotation so the wider pharmacy team can plan ahead. The EPDs are also able to book external speakers well in advance. As the topics become more clinical the sessions are on occasions delivered by specialist nurses or pharmacists and facilitated by an EPD on a rotational basis to help share the workload.

Schedules of learning topics

Year 1 PTPT schedule	
Month	Learning topic
March	Introduction to GPhC professional Standards and professional appraisals
April	BNF & abbreviations
May	Pharmacy calculations
June	Introduction to your professional body APTUK
July	Medicines Information resources
September	Introduction to Patient Group Directions (PGD's)
October	Reflective writing
November	CD schedules
December	The role of the CCG pharmacy technician
January	The role of the PCN pharmacy technician
February	Medicines and device counselling skills
Year 2 PTPT schedule	
Month	Learning topic
March	Resilience
April	Final accuracy checking theory
May	Mental health
June	Medicines management in Parkinson's disease
July	Acute Coronary Syndrome
September	Irritable Bowel Disease
October	Antimicrobials
November	Support for job applications
December	GPhC revalidation
January	CCU & paediatrics
February	Continuing professional development (CPD)

Reflection

It has been easy to evaluate the value of this training and networking for the trainees, however the EPDs have agreed to continue to meet up regularly to support each other's wellbeing, share information, monitor progress, develop innovative working practices, discuss ideas and review the PTPT network training. The network has also collaborated with other healthcare professionals who have been invited to share their expertise on topics such as Parkinson's disease and antimicrobials. The group would highly recommend to other regions setting up a similar collaborative working platform to ensure their own wellbeing needs are prioritised. This in turn will ensure the effective development of training opportunities can be optimised in order to improve patient safety and care.

Suzi Hawthorn commented, *'The collaborative working with other EPDs during the challenges of the past year has been amazing and innovative; I'm really proud to be part of this team. It's been a difficult year for us all, but our trainees have benefitted from shared learning and networking opportunities that weren't previously available and the peer support and friendships have proved so important for EPDs and trainees alike'*.



Acknowledgements:

Sue Jones, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Trust
 Jenny Stevens, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust
 Helen Gisby, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
 Suzi Hawthorn, Medway NHS Foundation Trust
 Chloe Bolt, Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust
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'An Interview With...Meet the Member'


Name:

Helen Taylor (aka Nel)

Current Role:

Leeds Medicines Formulary Manager, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Helen.taylor63@nhs.net

Highest qualification related to your role:

Master of Science in Health and Social Care

Steps you took to get to where you are now:

When I was 16 I got a job at the local high street pharmacy. I'd been a girl guide and then became a ranger and later found out that this particular pharmacy always recruited from the local guide units. I remember the interview well – there was a handwriting test and a maths test and I was up against two other rangers. The handwriting test involved speed writing labels for bottles with a green fountain pen (yes, I really am that old!). The pharmacist then asked me some questions about my career aspirations (terrible idea, sometimes I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up!) and finally what chest size I was – I must have looked quite shocked at this as he then explained it was for my white overall. So I got the job as a Saturday girl – I've often wondered where I would have ended up if they hadn't had that size overall in stock.

After A levels I was helping in the dispensary during the summer holiday, wondering what to do and the dispenser suggested training as a pharmacy technician. I was the only community trainee at college; I was in the first year of the BTEC at Matthew Boulton Tech in Birmingham. I attended college on my day off and had a ball – met some great folk who I have remained friends with ever since. I truly thought it was a short term career that would do for a couple of years whilst I looked for something else. How wrong I was!

After qualification I remained there for another year or so and then moved to another community pharmacy that provided wider services – my training course did not cover many of these as it focussed on hospital pharmacy, but I loved it – oxygen supplies, addiction services, nursing homes medicines management, dressings services for district nurses, and so on. Eventually I decided I wanted to move away from the city so scoured the Pharmaceutical Journal for opportunities. I accepted a job offer at the pharmacy of a large psychiatric hospital – a move that changed my life and my career.

I absolutely adored that job – still one of my favourites. I worked in the pharmacy, on the wards, at the addiction unit and in the secure unit. Quite rightly we don't provide patient care like that anymore, some of those folk had been born there and been there all their life but I must add that the nursing teams were wonderful to them and provided truly compassionate care. The pharmacist that I worked most closely with gave me great opportunities to experience so many different aspects of clinical care – I learned a huge amount.

I then applied for a senior pharmacy technician at a small district general hospital and stayed there for many years – it was

near to where I lived and worked brilliantly whilst my family were growing up. I did all the usual stuff such as inpatient and outpatient service provision, ward supplies, procurement, line management and risk management. During that time I undertook a few projects, such as applying medicines management techniques to materials management (who knew you could save so much just on dressings and syringes?!) and introduced clinical ward pharmacy technicians roles to the site. In 2000 I started the Clinical Pharmacy Technician Diploma at Derby University and this complemented my other skills well. I remember the hardest module being cardio-respiratory and was glad to pass that exam as I thought I wouldn't use that again – well, I was wrong! I shadowed, then took over from a pharmacist who was involved with the cardiac rehab club – for patients who had been discharged following treatment for myocardial infarction, valve repair, and so on. This really opened my eyes to personalised care for my patients and encouraged me to help set up a patient helpline in my pharmacy.

Changes in the way services are provided meant the imminent closure of these small sites and a chance conversation with a colleague saw me applying for a role in medicines information. I did the UKMI pharmacy technician course and over the next few years used the clinical pharmacy technician knowledge and skills to the max. I spent my days answering queries from all types of folk – consultants and GPs, patients and carers, pharmacy teams, nurses and AHPs. I never cease to be amazed at the questions that get asked: the biggest thing I learned was that you never need to know the answer, but you absolutely need to know where to look! I also undertook the day to day management of the medicines information centre – resources, staff, training, audit, funding. The centre also contributed to the national Vet Poisons enquiry service, which was fascinating and challenging.

I used that experience to apply for a promotion to my current role as formulary manager for the city-wide medicines formulary. This also involves being professional secretary to the Drug and Therapeutics Group – the body that oversees the introduction of new medicines to the acute hospital trust. This has to be my favourite role so far. I liaise closely with consultants and pharmacists to present the evidence for safe and effective use of medicines and oversee their journey onto the formulary. I have developed good working relationships with great people and it is absolutely fascinating being involved at the beginning of new use of medicines.

I also work closely with colleagues in the community, at the mental health trust and with commissioners to help make sure we are providing joined-up care across the city.

Somewhere along the way, I applied for a position on the GPhC Fitness to Practice committee and worked as a registrant member on there for 9 years – what an absolute eye opener that was!

What is the most challenging part of your current role?

At the moment, we are in a recovery phase following the pandemic and the changes required to make patient care as safe as possible, e.g. different dose schedules for chemotherapy so that patients attended for shorter appointments less often. Commissioning statements and guidance are updated almost weekly and it is a challenge to keep abreast of those and make sure we are in a place to offer the right care as soon as the evidence is published. These changes are often off-licence use and would not have been considered during 'normal' times. I

know that COVID-19 isn't going to come to 'An End', but once it is considered endemic rather than pandemic, there will need to be fairly rapid reviews of those changes to make sure that patients continue to receive the best care available. I'm a proper nit-picky worrywort, but I consider this be an admirable trait for someone in my role and the careful documentation of rationale for changes will be vital once those reviews are instigated. I'm really hoping that some of the changes are here to stay!

What surprised you the most moving from a traditional pharmacy technician role?

I'd worked in small community and hospital pharmacies for 25 years so moving to the medicines information 'desk job' in a large teaching hospital was a real challenge at first, but the sheer range of enquiries kept my brain very busy and I must admit I loved being able to have a cup of tea whenever I wanted! Every three months, the rota changed and I worked with three new pharmacists and six new pre-registration pharmacists; it was brilliant getting to know them all and picking their brains. The UKMI course was in its early days and I found it quite restrictive; my manager encouraged me to undertake more challenging enquiries and after I qualified we developed a local protocol for the range of work I would undertake – this opened my eyes to rewriting more possibilities for practising at the top of my licence. My current job is fast-moving and decisions are needed quickly – I love thinking on my feet and providing rapid advice.

If you had the chance to do it all over again, what would you change?

I missed a few opportunities for promotion because I was scared to try – thinking I did not quite meet the full specification. Now I would say to anyone – if you want to do the role, go for it; the worst that can happen is that you don't get it and you stand still a while longer. And just because it says pharmacist, don't be afraid to challenge that and suggest that you are a worthy registrant.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I absolutely love patient contact of any kind and have recently enjoyed helping at the vaccine centre which has been an extremely positive experience.

I get real pleasure seeing innovative medicines make it onto the formulary – conditions where we have previously provided palliative care are now getting gene and other advanced therapies. These aren't simple medicines you can pop out of a blister and into a compliance aid – some of them don't even look like a 'medicine'; it's like saying 'mode of transport' and then comparing a donkey with an Aston Martin DB9. They come with their own challenges to implement and it is a fascinating time to work in pharmacy.

What's the best piece of advice you have ever received?

Stick to your principles and practice with integrity. That has gotten me through so many tricky situations.

Also – 'Eat the Frog' – if you haven't read it, just google it – it could change your life. The idea is to tackle the hardest, most awful task right at the beginning of the day and get it over and done with – after that, your day will only get better.

What would you be doing if you weren't a pharmacy technician?

Designing and making wedding dresses – I did have a start-up business doing this in the 80s and made over 100 dresses for brides of all ages and sizes. I was quite young at the time and dealing with bridezillas and their mothers was not much fun! I don't scare that easily these days.

What do you think is the biggest issue currently facing pharmacy technicians?

Challenging the assumption that it must be a pharmacist that undertakes certain job roles. I have shamelessly applied for roles that state pharmacist and challenged that – and once I am in a role myself I then shamelessly work to get all the other job descriptions in that patch changed to 'registrant'.

Has anyone influenced your career decisions if so, why?

So many people. The two main ones are a colleague I worked with at the psychiatric hospital who encouraged me to change things there – this led onto the promotion to senior pharmacy technician. And more recently my partner Nigel, who is the most encouraging soul I have ever met and just laughs at me when I say I can't do something – then pushes me to do it anyway.

What do you do that supports equality, diversity and inclusion?

I challenge my assumptions and deal with my unconscious biases – check out the tasks on the Harvard website if you fancy doing the same – you might be surprised at yourself! I am a Freedom to Speak Up champion at work and back in the day I marched on Downing Street to argue for fair pay regardless of sex and better maternity rights.

What has been the highlight of your career, so far?

Achieving an MSc with Distinction (having never been to university before) and then publishing the project I undertook as a poster at the APTUK conference in 2019 – I got joint second place in the Excellence in Pharmacy Practice Award. I was so chuffed!

What can you not get right, no matter how many times you try?

Crochet! One to put aside for retirement.

Where do you usually go/do when you have time off?

I sew and stitch – counted embroidery such as hardanger – and I mess about with all sorts of crafts. I love to wander round our local nature reserve and watch the birds – we have kingfishers, red kites, nuthatches and all sorts of other creatures.

My fave holidays are spent sailing round the Greek Islands on a little yacht, just the two of us, then mooring up in the evening and partying in some random tavern with like-minded folk. It's very good for the soul but as my Greek dancing skills leave much to be desired, it's not always good for the toes!

Who do you go to for advice or to bounce ideas off?

My friend Gaynor who is also a pharmacy technician – she generally talks sense into me.

I am lucky to be in a great team with really wide experience – there is always someone who has come across a similar problem who can help.

What simple thing at work sparks joy?

Seeing colleagues I have helped train get their qualifications and achievements in the department newsletter – aww, that's always so good and I feel really proud for them.

Oh – and cake. Cake is always great – it usually means something nice is happening to someone in my team.

What's next?

I've just gained a promotion to Best Value Medicines Lead – that will be a really interesting challenge. These new products aren't tuppence a bucketful anymore, some come in at over £1m a dose, so there's a lot of work to be done!

Community Is The Best Medicine...

Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) is a unique funding programme that brings communities and Community Pharmacy together to work in partnership to address the social determinants of health and health inequalities through locally based projects.

The BCPP programme was launched in 2001 - it is delivered by Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) and funded by the Health and Social Care Board. Each year, £400,000 is distributed in funding. Over the last 20 years, the programme has supported 949 partnerships investing over £6.3 million. Awards are made at two levels: Level 1 funding is £2,500 and Level 2 funding is £12,000.

CONTEXT: The role that community pharmacies play in delivering primary care and in educating and engaging with local communities is continually developing in both the health care and community and voluntary sectors. The community pharmacies have a unique position of being the 'open door' to the Health Service. The pandemic has provided further proof (if it was needed) that pharmacy is an important community resource where advice and support can be accessed on health and general wellbeing, as well as being somewhere that people can be signposted to other services.

The clear policy direction for community pharmacy is that it will play a greater role in contributing to better health and wellbeing in the community. BCPP projects provide a fantastic opportunity to explore the potential of community pharmacy in this role - to build and develop relationships between pharmacy and community partners and to creatively engage with those most vulnerable to poor health such as women's groups and people who are homeless and experiencing various issues including poverty, bereavement and social isolation.

Building trust and developing relationships is a core part of every BCPP project

As the sessions take place in a community and with the community partner, the pharmacist is able to build on existing relationships. Co-production is key, the most successful projects are the ones where the power balance shifts and the pharmacist



and community see each other's strengths and assets.

Group work is core to the success of the programme

In each project, the community and pharmacy partners will engage with a small group of 12-15 individuals. This size is perfect for group work as participants feel safe to engage and discuss what are often very personal issues about themselves and their families.

A key element of BCPP is that the community partner and the pharmacist understand the context and conditions of people's lives. This enables them to improve their health literacy and offer support that is relevant and timely. The partners will learn from the participants about health issues in their community and together they will identify individual and local assets that can tackle these.



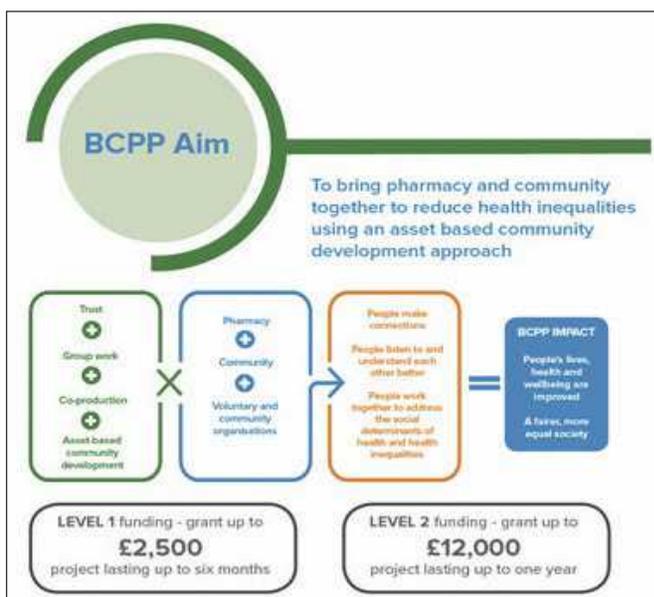
Pictured here is Centred Soul and McCartan's Pharmacy supporting a group of pregnant women and new mums in Newry. This was a fantastic programme which they were able to move online during lockdown to continue. (Picture taken before pandemic)

Each project has its own specific aims but the programme model ensures that they are evaluated consistently with a focus on measuring participants' health and wellbeing, life satisfaction, health literacy and social capital. Our last Impact Report showed the BCPP programme clearly has a positive impact on participant's health, as measured through the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ12), self-rated health and as observed by both the community organisation and the pharmacist.

There are also positive changes in the way participants feel about their health (in more control) and health issues (more knowledgeable and confident to take action) and in behaviours which influence health (healthy changes to lifestyle). BCPP evaluation data shows that participants, community organisations and pharmacists feel more knowledgeable about the range of factors which influence health and confident in their ability to take action on these. This would indicate that the BCPP model improves the health literacy of pharmacists, community and voluntary sector organisations and participants in the projects.

CDHN ensures that the learning from BCPP is shared widely and the programme is strategically positioned to impact policy and practice.

For further information contact Kathy Martin:



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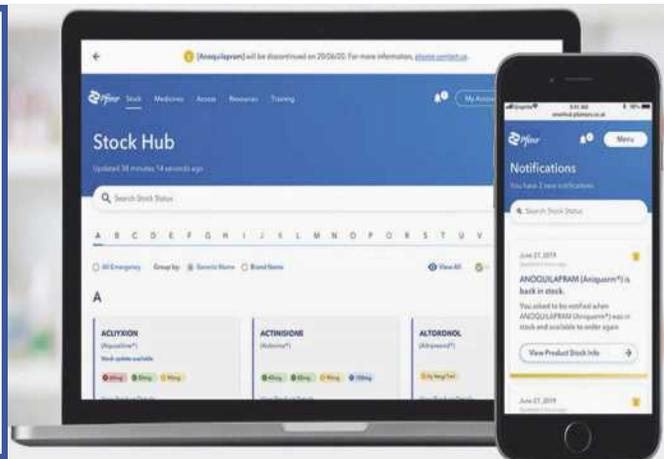
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