



Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Councils

Response to Making the Best use of the Pharmacy Workforce

June 2005

MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE PHARMACY WORKFORCE: A RESPONSE FROM THE HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCILS

1. There are four Health & Social Services Councils (HSSCs) in Northern Ireland mirroring the four Health & Social Services Boards. The Council are independent from those who plan, manage and deliver health and social care services in Northern Ireland.
2. The HSSCs were set up by the Government in 1991 to represent the views and opinions of the public to decision makers in health and social services. The four HSSCs work collaboratively to address regional matters to ensure a co-ordinated approach.
3. This response reflects the desire of the HSSCs to maintain and enhance the central place of pharmacy provision as part of a community response to promoting health and supporting patients.
4. The HSSCs support the proposition that arrangements, particularly for pharmacists working in the community, should be put in place to ensure that the best use is made of their skills and expertise. This has to be seen in the light of changes in general retailing of non-prescription medicines.
5. The HSSC feel that the requirement that a person be in personal control of the business of the retail sale and supply of medicines should be re-examined in the light of changes in practice elsewhere. However, there is a need for a pharmacist to be clearly responsible for each pharmacy whilst it is open for business.

6. The HSSCs do not have a view as to what period of time the pharmacist may be absent from the premises for and whether there are periods when they must be present. However, there should be clear governance arrangements to ensure safe practice and appropriate access to the pharmacist for advice and support by staff in the pharmacy.
7. Likewise, we agree that one pharmacist could be responsible for more than one pharmacy provided that suitable practice and governance arrangements are in place.
8. The issue of the role of pharmacy technicians is an important one. The pressure put on the current workforce is undeniable but patient safety and the current high reputation of the pharmacy service need to be safeguarded. The HSSCs believe that there may be an enhanced role for pharmacy technicians in dispensing medicines and the sale of medicines subject to training and registration.
9. The HSSCs welcome the opportunity to comment on these proposals and support them within the context of the development of pharmacy services as an important health resource to local communities.

S Cunningham

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