

Date: **Wednesday 23 October 2002**

Venue: **Committee Rooms 3 & 4, National Assembly for Wales**

Title: **Hospital Pharmacists**

Purpose

1. To update the Health and Social Services Committee on action taken to address the shortage of hospital pharmacists. The workforce position was discussed by the Committee at its meeting on 13 May 2002. The Committee is asked to note progress.

Summary

2. A number of key actions were previously identified to address the shortage of Hospital Pharmacists these included:

- Automation of the dispensing process
- Investment in the training of technical and support staff
- Strengthening the training infrastructure
- Introduction of a management development system

This paper outlines action taken to date on these issues.

Timing

3. The paper is presented at the request of the Committee.

Background

4. Following media coverage, the Minister for Health and Social Services met with representatives of the Chief Pharmacists Group on 15 April 2002 to discuss the challenges facing the hospital pharmaceutical service and to explore possible solutions.

Consideration

5. Four key areas for action were identified:

Automation of the dispensing process.

Automation of the dispensing process is required to enable more effective use of skill mix, reduce dispensing errors and dispensing time. An all Wales approach has much to commend it. It could be project managed and rolled out across Wales over a three year period making the best use of available resources (both in terms of technical personnel and finances). It would raise the profile of the service and demonstrate the Assembly's commitment to modernisation of the NHS. It would make Wales attractive to potential employees and help to retain staff within the service.

Investment in the training of technical and support staff.

Investment is needed in the training of technical and support staff. The ratio of pharmacists to technicians is 1:1 in Wales compared to 1:2 in England. Investment in this staffing group will lead to an improved skill mix and appropriate development of staff in line with the Assembly's Human Resource Strategy for the NHS.

Strengthening the training infrastructure.

The training infrastructure needs to be strengthened. There is a limited training capacity within the service and the infrastructure will need to be strengthened before additional training programmes can be put in place. It would appear that the service has not been fully resourced for this element of the service.

The Human Resources (HR) Division is currently pursuing bringing Pharmacy into line with other professional groups where infrastructure funding has been increased in line with training number increases.

Since this issue was first discussed the service has experienced difficulties in maintaining the existing infrastructure to support the current level of placements. Some NHS Trusts have indicated that they can no longer do so and have reduced the level of placements available.

Introduction of a management development system

A management development system is required to secure succession planning. The age profile of both the Chief Pharmacists and Specialist Principal Pharmacists means that succession planning is essential to ensure that pharmacists with the appropriate skills and

experience are able to assume these roles. There is no programme to support this at present.

Initial discussion with the HR Division has taken place with a view to approaching the Centre of Health Leadership in Wales to discuss the feasibility of developing such a programme.

Further Consideration

6. 'Remedies for Success – a strategy for Pharmacy in Wales' contains a section on workforce and related issues. This document is currently out for consultation.

7. 'Pharmacy Workforce in the new NHS' a consultative document recently issued by the Department of Health is also being consulted on in Wales as any changes to the supervision requirements of the Medicines Act 1968 would, subject to Parliamentary approval, apply throughout the United Kingdom. It will be for the Assembly, together with NHS Wales, to be responsible for implementing new ways of working within the revised framework.

8. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has recently formed a Workforce Planning and Policy Advisory Group. The Group is being asked to develop a proactive and responsive system for scoping the future workforce needs in pharmacy and to make recommendations as to how future supply and demand could be managed. The Assembly is represented on the Group by officials from Human Resources and Pharmaceutical Divisions.

Financial Consequences

9. The action plan will be agreed subject to funding available for this area within the Health & Social Services Budget settlement.

Compliance

10. Hospital Pharmaceutical Services are provided under functions contained in Section 2 of the National Health Service Act 1977 which has been transferred to the Assembly and delegated to the Minister for Health & Social Services. There are no issues of regularity or propriety. ACO has seen this advice and is content (Ref LPR: 248/10/02).

Action

11. The Committee is asked to note the paper.

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