

PRESS RELEASE
09 November 2020

OVER 1,100 JOBS FOR NI PHARMACY IN NEXT FIVE YEARS

More than 1,100 additional roles in the pharmacy sector in Northern Ireland will be required over the next five years. The opportunities – which will see current vacancies filled as well as new roles created in response to the development of new pharmacy services – will include up to 560 community, hospital and general practice pharmacists and over 600 pharmacy technicians.

The search and recruitment will be supported by the 'Pharmacy Futures NI' joint campaign, launched today by the Department of Health for Northern Ireland and Pharmacy Forum NI – the professional leadership body for pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

Sheelin McKeagney, Chair of Pharmacy Forum NI, commented:

“Over the past decade in particular we have seen demand for pharmacists increase significantly as hospitals introduced seven day working and new roles have been created in the hospital and general practice sectors – many of which have been filled by experienced community pharmacists.

“While all of these factors have placed enormous pressures on the existing workforce, they have given us an opportunity to attract, recruit and retain more pharmacists into the sector in Northern Ireland.”

The requirement for the roles has been identified in the Department's 'Pharmacy Workforce Review', **also** published today and which is designed to inform Health and Social Care (HSC) workforce development needs in the pharmacy sector over the next 10 years. Developed specifically to respond to the Review's recommendations, 'Pharmacy Futures NI' is initially aimed at students thinking of entering the profession and pharmacists working away from home who may be thinking of returning to Northern Ireland.

Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health NI, explained:

“Over the last 30 years the pharmacy profession has been on a transition from the traditional dispensing of medicines to patient facing clinical roles. This expanding clinical role of pharmacists, supported by pharmacy technicians and adoption of technologies such as automation and robots, has resulted in greater effectiveness and importantly better health outcomes for patients.

“Consequently, these professional groups are in high demand and this will only continue to grow in the coming years – bringing a need to recruit additional pharmacists, alongside skilled pharmacy technicians and pharmacy support staff.”

The recommendations contained within the Review are consistent with proposals for UK-wide reform of the initial education and training of pharmacists in the coming years, which aim to ensure that pharmacy students are prepared for increasingly clinical roles in a multi-sector health environment across hospitals, general practice and community pharmacy.

Sheelin McKeagney, Chair of Pharmacy Forum NI, added:

“The Pharmacy Futures NI campaign will promote pharmacy as a career of choice in Northern Ireland – underpinned by a wide range of compelling factors such as greater opportunities for career progression and development, a fully integrated health and social care model, alongside the lower cost of living and quality of life for which the region is so well renowned.

“Through Pharmacy Futures NI, we will highlight the exciting new era into which the pharmacy profession in Northern Ireland is entering,” Mr McKeagney continued.

“For example, incoming changes to the initial education and training of pharmacists across the UK, which will include reform of the current pre-registration year, will fully equip our future pharmacists for a range of clinical roles working directly with patients to optimise their outcomes from medicines.”

“This, alongside many new service development interventions in pharmacy, will see the role of pharmacists expand to encompass a much wider range of clinical services and will enable pharmacists a greater focus on their remit as medicines experts.”

The Pharmacy Futures NI campaign will run from today, 9 November 2020, until early January 2021 and will feature range of creative initiatives, including videos, digital assets and [website](#)) which will act as a recruitment hub for those interested in pharmacy roles in Northern Ireland. Over 30 ‘Pharmacy Champions’ will act as key communicators during the campaign, charting their career pathways and sharing their career highlights and experiences in the profession.

For more information about the Pharmacy Futures NI info, visit www.pharmacyfuturesni.com

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PHOTO CAPTION:

Pictured are: Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health for Northern Ireland and Sheelin McKeagney, Chairman, Pharmacy Forum NI

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