

**From: Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Professor Cathy Harrison**



To: Newly Qualified Pharmacists

CC: Pharmacists managing, mentoring or supporting Newly Qualified Pharmacists

Castle Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 9052 3219

Email: Cathy.Harrison@health-ni.gov.uk

Ref

Date: 13 August 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Congratulations on reaching this important milestone in your professional journey. Qualifying as a pharmacist is not only the culmination of years of study and dedication, but also the beginning of a career that will allow you to have a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

You are joining the profession at a time of both challenge and opportunity, as part of the first cohort of newly qualified pharmacist independent prescribers from day one on the register. The role of the pharmacist in Northern Ireland is evolving rapidly, from ensuring safe and effective supply of medicines, to delivering increasingly complex clinical services and supporting public health as part of the developing neighbourhood model of health and wellbeing. Your prescribing skills alongside your scientific expertise, compassion, integrity and sound professional judgement will equip you to work as an integral part of multidisciplinary teams across a range of healthcare settings, providing better access to medicines and helping to meet patients' health and care needs.

At all times during your professional career and especially as a newly qualified prescribing pharmacist, understanding the scope of your practice is a vital part of sound professional judgement. As outlined in the Pharmaceutical Society NI's '[Code of Conduct, Ethics and Performance for Pharmacists in Northern Ireland](#)', you should ensure you understand and work within your own boundaries of competence, reflecting regularly on your practice and seeking areas for improvement.

As newly qualified pharmacists, your scope of practice will be based on the competence and experience you have gained from your core training. When you start work, you should agree the scope of your prescribing with your employer. Prescribing within your scope of practice may mean saying 'no' to prescribing requests which you consider to be outside your knowledge and experience such as prescribing higher-risk medicines or those that require additional safeguards, prescribing for complex conditions which may require specialist input, or prescribing in situations where you may not have all the necessary information.

The Pharmaceutical Society NI is currently considering feedback from the recent consultation on 'Draft Standards for Pharmacist Prescribers in Northern Ireland' which aims to outline updated professional expectations for safe, ethical and effective pharmacist prescribing in all

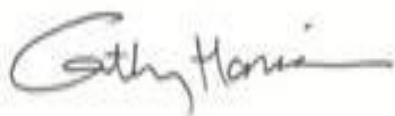
settings, and will provide further information on this in due course. The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) has also recently published [advice for newly qualified pharmacists](#) about factors to consider when beginning and developing your prescribing practice which you may find useful to consider in the interim.

At a time of rapid change within Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland, effective professional leadership empowers healthcare professionals with the resources and support they need to deliver the highest standards of clinical practice. As the professional leadership body for pharmacists in Northern Ireland, Pharmacy Forum NI has recently launched '[Bridging the Gap – A Guide for Newly Qualified Pharmacists in Northern Ireland](#)'. Drawing on the recent experiences of Pharmacy Forum NI's Early Career Pharmacist Working Group, 'Bridging the Gap' provides practical, locally developed support for newly qualified pharmacists during what can be a challenging and formative period and is also a valuable resource for the wider pharmacy workforce, helping employers, managers and colleagues create supportive environments for those entering professional practice.

Qualifying as a pharmacist is an achievement of which you should be proud, but it is only the beginning of a journey of lifelong learning, and I encourage you to avail of the resources available to you to support your continued professional development as you navigate the transition from trainee to qualified independent prescribing pharmacist. A new [Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning & Development \(NICPLD\) Enhanced Pharmacy Practice \(EPP\) programme](#) for qualified prescribers will start in January 2027, replacing the current Post-reg Foundation Programme (PRFP). This programme will support newly qualified prescribing pharmacists working in patient facing roles in all sectors to further develop the skills, knowledge, behaviours and experience of a pharmacist working at pre-advanced levels of practice.

I welcome you warmly to the profession and wish you every success as you embark on this new chapter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Harrison', with a stylized, flowing script.

Professor Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer