

**Report on NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacist recruitment in England & Wales  
for the 2016 intake (1<sup>st</sup> round of recruitment)**

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**Introduction**

The National Recruitment Scheme is the system through which pharmacy undergraduates and OSPAP students apply for pre-registration trainee pharmacist posts in NHS hospitals in England and Wales. The application stage of recruitment is handled by Pharmalife (Webstar Health) with all other stages of recruitment handled by the hospitals or regional panels. Recruitment for the 2016 intake of trainees took place in 2015. This report provides a summary of the first round of recruitment for the 2016 intake of trainees.

**Number of places advertised**

There was a **2.7 % increase** in the number of pre-registration training positions advertised compared to last year (n = 689 for the 2016 intake and n = 666 for the 2015 intake).

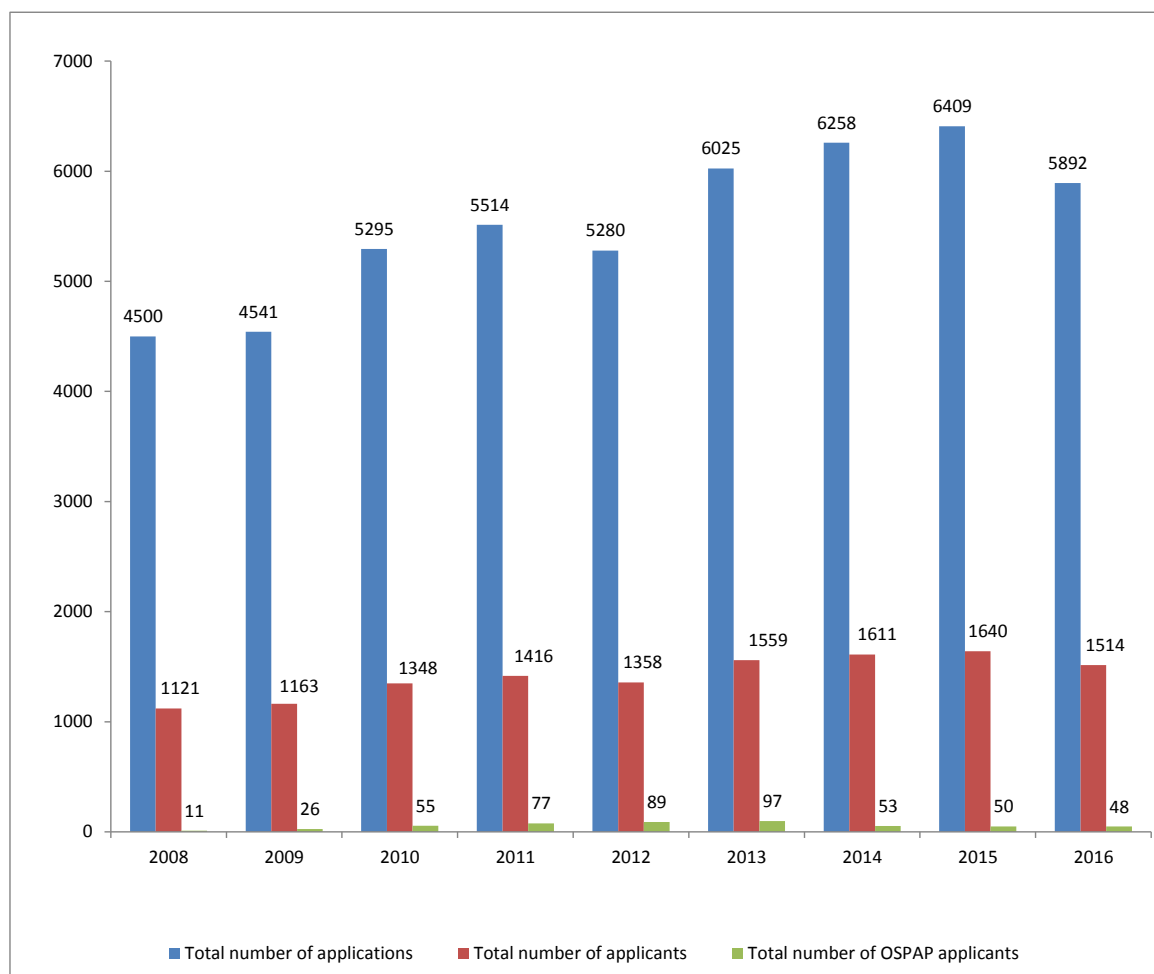
**Number of applications**

There was an **8.0%** decrease in applications compared to last year and the number of applications was the lowest number of applications since the 2012 intake. Table 1.0 shows the number of applications and applicants for the last 4 years. Trends in applications over time are also shown in figure 1.0 on page 2.

**Table 1.0: Applications and applicants from 2013 – 2016 intake**

Year	Number of applications	Number of students
2016 intake	5892	1514
2015 intake	6404	1640
2014 intake	6258	1611
2013 intake	6026	1559

**Figure 1.0: Applications and applicants 2008 – 2016 intakes of pre-registration recruitment**



48 applicants were from the Overseas Pharmacist Assessment Programme (OSPAP course) which is a similar number to the last 2 years (n = 50 for the 2014 intake and n = 53 for the 2013 intake). There were also 4 applicants who are EEA Pharmacists required by the GPhC to undertake pre-registration training.

There was a decrease in applications to hospitals in most regions ranging from a 3.71% decrease in the North West to a 32.25% decrease in the West Midlands. Numbers of applications to hospitals in Yorkshire and the Humber were similar to last year with < 1% decrease. There was an increase 33.33% in applications to hospitals in North East and North Cumbria compared to last year but this is due to the fact that Sunderland School of Pharmacy had a much lower than usual cohort of student last year so the number of applicants to hospitals in North East and North Cumbria was much lower last year. Table 2.0 on page 3, shows data on applications per region for the last 3 years.

**Table 2.0: Applications per region for the 2014, 2015 and 2016 recruitment intakes.**

	Applications 2014 intake	Applications 2015 intake	Applications 2016 intake	% change since last year
East Midlands	384	473	432	8.66% decrease
East of England	544	543	473	12.89% decrease
London	1952	1889	1729	8.47% decrease
North West	707	727	700	3.71% decrease
South East	482	597	564	5.53% decrease
South West	292	383	342	10.70% decrease
Wales	299	274	262	4.38% decrease
West Midlands	566	583	395	32.25% decrease
Yorkshire and The Humber	458	406	402	0.99% decrease
Thames Valley	213	276	249	9.78% decrease
North East and North Cumbria	361	258	344	<b>33.33% increase</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6258</b>	<b>6409</b>	<b>5892</b>	

### Timing of applications

The majority of applications were made in August 97.8% (n = 5762) and this is a similar pattern to previous years. 66.4 % (n = 3912) of applications were made in the last three days which is slightly lower than in previous years where the percentage of “last minute” applications was around 70 – 75%. No late applications were accepted.

### Applications per hospital

169 hospitals advertised places for the 2016 intake. There was an average of 34.86 applications per hospital compared with an average of 38.38 applications per hospital for the 2015 intake and 36.8 applications per hospital for the 2014 intake.

On average there were 8.55 applications per advertised post (compared with an average of 9.62 applications per advertised post for the 2015 intake and 9.62 applications per post for the 2014 intake). The lower figure is due to an increase in numbers of places advertised and a decrease in the number of applications.

There were a total of 1514 students applying for 689 advertised posts. 2.19 students applied per advertised post this year which is lower than the last 2 years (2.46 students applied per post for the 2015 intake; 2.49 students applied per post for the 2014 intake).

Hospitals received between 1 and 229 applications. Kings Health Partners (KHP) and Barts Health NHS Trust received the highest number of applications, each receiving over 200 applications. However both of these hospitals advertised a large number of places (KHP = 40 and Barts = 18) and these figures may indicate that students are applying to hospitals which offer the most places.

Nine hospitals received more than 100 applications and 7 of these hospitals were in London. Three non-London hospitals were in the top 10 compared to four last year. Twelve non-London hospitals were in the top 20 compared with thirteen last year.

### Applicants from Schools of Pharmacy

Intake	Number of MPharm applicants								
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Aberdeen	43	45	39	53	36	32	25	24	21
Aston	62	68	65	61	39	43	60	74	43
Bath	52	67	64	77	50	61	71	79	78
Belfast (Queens)	8	6	5	2	7	4	7	5	7
Bradford	48	42	58	31	34	37	36	39	28
Brighton	75	85	65	74	51	42	66	69	79
Cardiff	67	44	66	72	63	63	73	74	65
Central Lancashire				18	32	33	32	48	43
Hertfordshire		22	49	60	44	64	71	93	71
Huddersfield					29	38	32	33	39
Keele			23	27	34	40	50	56	53
Kingston	30	47	52	59	43	90	74	68	67
Leicester	65	47	44	40	49	44	47	59	43
Liverpool	42	77	45	54	55	53	60	49	52
London Kings	72	50	69	55	64	60	96	76	79
London (University College)	116	99	98	99	95	128	118	120	108
Manchester	107	89	94	82	100	85	86	71	66
Medway	47	42	88	84	56	62	84	103	105
Norwich (UEA)	53	43	56	55	48	63	79	69	58
Nottingham	82	79	111	108	116	124	122	137	90
Portsmouth	46	67	64	47	50	64	57	52	58
Reading		20	54	60	44	56	51	80	56
Strathclyde	8	10	17	24	36	51	46	36	42
Sunderland	87	77	49	57	67	91	76	31	74
University of Ulster						1	2	4	1
Wolverhampton			17	11	26	27	36	41	36

	Number of OSPAP applicants								
Intake	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
International **	11								
Aberdeen OSPAP PgDip		0	2	6	7	6	0	0	0
Aberdeen MSc OSPAP				3	4	6	0	0	0
Aston OSPAP PgDip		9	35	30	36	17	9	9	6
Aston MSc OSPAP						9	6	6	6
Brighton OSPAP PgDip		11	11	20	19	22	11	2	6
Brighton MSc OSPAP						5	4	2	1
Hertfordshire OSPAP PgDip					2	3	2	6	5
Kingston OSPAP PgDip				0	7	14	5	5	1
Sunderland OSPAP PgDip		6	8	17	12	2	4	5	13
Sunderland MSc OSPAP						13	12	14	10
	Number of EEA Pharmacist applicants***								
Intake	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EEA*** Schools of Pharmacy					3	6	1	1	4
<b>Total number of applicants (MPharm + OSPAP + EEA Pharmacists)</b>	<b>1121</b>	<b>1163</b>	<b>1348</b>	<b>1416</b>	<b>1358</b>	<b>1559</b>	<b>1611</b>	<b>1640</b>	<b>1514</b>

\*\* The 2009 intake was the first time that we had a breakdown of the Schools of Pharmacy for the OSPAP course.

\*\*\* EEA Pharmacists with notification from the GPhC to undertake pre-registration training (adaptation training)

### Academic references

Academic references were not obtained for a total of 44 MPharm students. 37 of these students submitted their academic referee details after the 30<sup>th</sup> June deadline therefore Pharmalife did not collect these references. 7 students submitted their referee details on time but the referee did not provide a reference.

Referees for students who met the 30 June deadline were contacted during August to chase outstanding references. In addition a list of outstanding references was sent to the pre-registration co-ordinator at each school of pharmacy to ask them to follow up the references or find a replacement referee if necessary. If no reference has been collected for the student the application form specified whether the reason e.g.

- Pharmalife DOES NOT have an academic reference for this applicant because they submitted their academic referee details LATE

Or

- Pharmalife DOES NOT have an academic reference for this applicant because the academic referee did not supply a reference when requested to do so

The validity of all applications and academic references were confirmed by obtaining lists from schools of pharmacy.

## **Appointment**

644 of the 689 advertised places were filled in the first round. 20 of these were filled by regional clearing. Three regions filled all of their vacancies in the first round.

A total of 51 places at 35 hospitals were advertised in the second round. This is higher than last year when there were 44 second round places at 29 hospitals. Some of the second round places this year were newly commissioned posts that were not advertised in the first round. One hospital had a vacancy that was not advertised in the second round.

## **Offers and responses to offers**

819 offers were made in the first round. 644 offers were accepted and 175 offers were rejected by students. Students were asked to respond to offers online within 72 hours and could choose to accept, reject or 'hold' the offer. 84.4% of offers (n = 691) were responded to within 72 hours. This is lower than last year when 97.6% of offers (n = 764) were responded to within 72 hours. Students who had not responded to an offer within 72 hours were sent a reminder email and if these students didn't respond within 24 hours they were contacted by phone or email.

23.0% of offers (n = 189) were placed on hold. The length of time that an offer was held was very variable ranging from less than 24 hours to 22 days. 29% of offers (n = 77) were held for less than 72 hours, 36.5% of offers (n = 69) were held for 72 hours – 1 week, 33% of offers (n = 63) were held from 1 – 2 weeks and two offers were held for more than 2 weeks. All offers that were made before 02 October were responded to by this date.

On the whole students were holding on to offers longer this year than last year. The timing of interviews may be a factor but we received anecdotal reports that some students were very indecisive in their decision making. The purpose of the 'on-hold' option is so that students can attend multiple interviews before they have to make a final decision; the purpose of 'on-hold' is not to procrastinate over multiple offers. Students are advised to know their preferences should they receive multiple offers but we received anecdotal reports that students had not done this.

8.5% of offers (n = 55) were accepted in the last 3 days before the deadline (02 October). The number of students making last minute decisions was lower than last year (11.8% / n = 64)

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## Discussion and conclusions

The low number of applications this year was surprising and we would have expected an increase in applications due to the increase in student numbers. We contacted the BPSA to see if they have any insight into the reasons why fewer students applied to hospital this year. The BPSA carried out a survey and had 250 responses from 16 schools of pharmacy. The themes identified from the survey were as follows:

There were a few key themes that kept cropping up repeatedly:

1. Students simply preferred community pharmacy, and had not been interested in applying for a hospital placement
2. Students perceived hospital as a more competitive, lengthy application process (some talked about the process being too stressful or coming at a time full of high university work loads) with a number feeling as though they had no chance of being successful as they had been unable to secure hospital summer placement experience
3. Students had already accepted a community placement

We have included some myths in the presentation to schools of pharmacy about hospital being too competitive and needing to have hospital pharmacy experience.

We have also received feedback from NES that there was a large increase in applications to Scotland from students from Schools of Pharmacy this year. Many of these applications came from international students who wanted to work in community pharmacy. This is because all trainees on the NES pre-registration scheme receive the band 5 Agenda for Change salary which means that the salary is above the threshold for Tier 2 visas for community pharmacy pre-registration training in Scotland. We do not know how many of the students applied via NES and Pharmalife so it is not possible to determine the impact of this on applications to hospital pharmacy in England and Wales.

Regional co-ordinators have been invited to provide feedback and gather feedback from hospitals in their region on the website functionality in preparation for improvements for the 2017 intake of recruitment.