

**Support Staff Specialist Group**  
**Minutes of the meeting, Monday 19 October 2009**  
**50 Eastbourne Terrace, Paddington, London**

**1. Present**

Vanessa Eggerdon (VE) chair, Sarah Wright (SW), Samantha Mitchelson (SM), Melanie Boughen (MB), Helen Fawcett (HF), Ellen Bidwell (EB), Deborah Williams (DW), Jane Pyatt (JP), Catherine Savage (CS), Tess Fenn (TF), Diane Blunden (DB), Tracey Burrows (TB) secretary

**2. Apologies**

Dalgeet Puaar, Alison Simpson, Kath Stride, Barbara Wensworth, Helen Knipe, Beth Barratt, Jennifer Harris

**3. Minutes of meeting held 20 July 2009**

Helen Fawcett added to apologies

Page 3 – any organisation '**outside** of south west can register for a fee' to add.

Page 5 – 'south west **wanting** to use pharmacy technicians' to add

The minutes were then agreed as accurate.

**4. Matters arising**

**Nomination of secretary – VE**

Nominations for secretary should be sent to VE before the next meeting on 13 January 2010.

Please inform the person you wish to nominate first. VE will continue to chair the NHS PEDC SSG until January 2011. VE has created a draft version of the SSG members pack and will need to update this due to the focus meeting.

**Action:** Once VE has the correct up to date version VE will forward to TB to circulate to the group.

**Responses to consultations**

VE stated that it is important that members respond to consultations within the timescales set so that a strong response is provided from the group.

**ACPT Framework**

HF asked how this linked in with the new pharmacy National Occupational Standards unit. TF said that she envisaged that the two will fit together once the unit is approved. There was discussion around how the framework also fits in with electronic prescribing practices. VE suggested that more information is obtained nationally regarding how the ACPT framework fits into electronic prescribing practices, e.g. accuracy checking when no prescription to check against.

**Action:** VE to feed back to the morning group when more information is obtained on current checking processes. Members to find out what is happening with robotics, dispensing and checking and informatics so that data is collected to inform the issues to be addressed by mid November 09

**Apprenticeships on hold for pharmacy assistants due to no technical certificate**

CS stated that this was a problem for Wales – once you stop drawing down the funding it is hard to get back and also loses momentum for Apprenticeships. CS had spoken to Dawn Probert and Amanda Hall at Skills for Health (SfH). SfH ensured work on this would be brought forward. CS will write a letter to Dawn Probert to flag this up as an issue.

TF informed the group that work on development of the new Technical Certificate for the Level 2 and 3 Pharmacy qualifications has not started yet as underpinning knowledge requirements are being agreed with the RPSGB in connection with the education standards. The Level 3 will be broader, e.g. contain knowledge for any sector of pharmacy.

### **Chemist & Druggist training - HK**

HK requested if anyone at the meeting has working knowledge of / currently uses C&D (Chemist & Druggist) Training?

HK has had a meeting with the Projects Director, Training Development Manager and Director of Events and Training of the C&D and they appear to be offering an alternative to NVO Level 2 for pharmacy assistants called the Benchmark Dispensing Assistant Course. Does anyone at the meeting have anything to feedback about this being used in the NHS? It is a course which has been accredited by the RPSGB and, although predominantly the C&D material is aimed at retail assistants, C&D have informed HK that they can tailor their training to the requirements of the client(s). Also, the more clients that want that training, the cheaper the cost as it is shared across the Trusts, SHAs, regions and therefore the training is standardised too.

The people that visited HK are very keen to send their C&D Training Opportunities Programme to the SSSG meeting for review by everyone there. Contact either myself or the C&D people direct for further information.

C&D Projects Director – Patrick Grice – [pgrice@cmpmedica.com](mailto:pgrice@cmpmedica.com) (pharmacist)

C&D Training Development Manager – Asha Fowells – [afowells@cmpmedica.com](mailto:afowells@cmpmedica.com) (pharmacist)

CMPMedica Director of Events & Training (Sales to you and me)! – Ralph Collett – [rcollett@cmpmedica.com](mailto:rcollett@cmpmedica.com)

**Action:** TB to send out C&D training brochure. Members to feedback to Helen on their experiences

### **5. Discussion of important issues**

#### **Consultation on the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) standards**

These have been written and are ready soon for a full consultation – likely to be out this week. The consultation documents will be available on the RPSGB or GPhC website.

**Action:** Members to meet up and start the ball rolling with comments from the group. VE to send some dates out for Mid Nov.

#### **Derby Aseptics Diploma - GR**

This course has been suspended until sufficient interest can be raised again. Fifteen to twenty people are required per cohort for the course to run (on a 2 yearly recruitment basis) - presently there has been potential interest from thirteen students so more are required to ensure it runs next year. This is a worry. If a two yearly recruitment programme cannot be maintained it will be lost completely because the resource required for updates, etc will not be financially viable. It is crucial to keep this course afloat - as it is distance learning - the whole of UK can tap into this. Most importantly – there has been very positive feedback from those who have accessed the course, confirming that it provides excellent professional development.

GR's other concern is that the plans for the revised pharmacy technician qualifications - which seem not to serve technical services needs that well – make an even stronger case for supporting the Derby Aseptics Diploma course and its continuation.

### **Regulation**

TF stated the need to respond when the pharmacy premises consultation comes out to highlight the issues for pharmacy assistants.

Medicines Counter Assistant (MCA) courses – is this course used by the NHS? Yes. Do you have to do the MCA course if you are doing the NVQ Level 3 unit that relates to over the counter sales?

No.

## **6. SSSG objectives**

### **Regulation – MB**

There has not been a surge of new registrants since the statutory register opened in July 2009. Discussions have taken place to generate ideas on how to encourage people to register. Encouragement to do this needs to come from the top, senior managers need to bring the issue out into the open. Pharmacy technicians also need to be sold the benefits of registering. SM had stated that letters had gone out from Trust HR departments within her area to pharmacy technicians stating the potential consequences of not registering, e.g. job loss or reduction in pay. There have been some rumours of re-naming pharmacy technicians to avoid having to register; this issue should be addressed when the pharmacy practice framework and regulatory standards are introduced, as this will clearly set out what activities a pharmacy technician is expected to be able to carry out on day one of qualifying. DB had spoken to Keith Ridge and Janet Flint from the RPSGB regarding this. There may also be options to split the registration costs over the year. South West have been targeting pharmacy technicians who do not have the required qualifications to register. NVQ Assessment Centres also need to check that new trainee assessor and internal verifiers hold a qualification that allows them to register before registering them for the assessor and verifier qualifications. HF also stated that we still need confirmation on requirements of assessors and trainers in the workplace undertaking a relevant teaching qualification.

### **National Projects/consultations – DP/AS**

#### **New pharmacy qualifications**

The first draft of unit writing took place in July. Comments on these were received. There have been some crediting and levelling meetings, this involved both awarding bodies. The groups reviewed the feedback from the electronic consultation which has resulted in some units being re-written. They also assigned a level and credit to each unit, this involved agreeing the guided learning hours for each unit (training & assessment). These are now going to go back to the RPSGB Support Staff Advisory Group (SSAG) for approval.

Knowledge units are due to start being developed shortly with a deadline of May 2010 ready to go live by Sept 2010. These deadlines are on track at present.

The Level 2 technical certificate has not been agreed yet, although work has started. The first draft was viewed by the SSAG in October 09. City & Guilds (C&G) are organising some days in the new year to provide briefings on the new pharmacy qualifications – keep an eye on C&G website. C&G are also running Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) workshops to give a general overview of the QCF.

Information about current consultations is detailed in agenda point 5.

### Funding – TB/AS

Apprenticeships – HF asked for information from other members who are using apprenticeships for the NVQ Level 3, especially regarding self assessment reviews so that information can be shared. TB informed the group that she had been to a conference about Apprenticeships last month held by Skills for Health. At the conference London Strategic Health Authority (SHA) gave information about funding available at the moment. There is a real push on Apprenticeships, with London asking for 600 new starts by April 2010. There has been a slow take up in London and the SHA are writing to Chief Executives of trusts to inform them of this opportunity.

Other potential funding streams were:

- Future Jobs
- Jobcentre Plus
- Graduate (unemployed) funding
- Business Link website

The National Apprenticeship Service also said that it would pay for new assessors to be trained in the workplace to support Apprenticeships.

SM said she would share the information she has regarding apprenticeships.

There is also information coming through that suggests if someone has completed the apprenticeship at Level 2 then there is no funding for Level 3.

**Action:** Members to share their information on apprenticeships

### Accredited Checking Pharmacy Technician Framework – DB/KS

DB is still collating information on different ACPT schemes.

### Support and develop higher level qualifications – GR/EB

#### TSET Update

The last minutes were circulated. The new PTQA Programme Manager was announced. The 2009/11 cohort has now commenced and the new programme manager is Maria Bedll.

There was a presentation of the new TSET Aseptic processing Programme at NHS QA Symposium on 28/29th Sept. GR presented the new programme, along with Gill Robson, from Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle. Extremely positive feedback was received from a workshop held around use of the programme as an annual revalidation resource - GR will circulate the document. BBraun have agreed to sponsor the workbooks, details of this will be released later this year. The Online resource will be available as open access, however it is advised that learners will benefit from using the workbook as the primary training, with the online providing a refresher and MCQs assessment.

**Action:** let GR know of estimated demand in your area, so copies can be reserved.

Rachel Dixon is continuing her project on a Competency Framework for ALL Technical Services Staffing from pharmacy assistant to consultant pharmacist. This was also presented at the QA Symposium, and was very well received. It is hoped that an electronic resource may be developed, as the framework is very involved. This looks very promising and a really useful reference for staff development. Further updates will be provided. (Sally Kemp also presented the IPPC and FAC in Tech Services)

New TSET website : [www.tset.org.uk](http://www.tset.org.uk) is now live.

A Clinical Trials module is under discussion.

### Higher Level Skills

GR has not been able to update the original collated document, however here are some examples of higher level programmes accessed by a range of pharmacy technicians - which demonstrate that there are many routes we may pursue in support of various roles:

#### Masters programmes

- MSc PTQA - The 2009/11 cohort has 20% of pharmacy technicians within the group from across UK and a couple of internationals.
- Masters programmes in management - a number of pharmacy technicians have accessed MBA/ MSc/ MA programmes from a range of Universities, for some years now.
- Many Universities are running Advanced Practice Programmes which are multidisciplinary, and pharmacy technicians with previous higher level study will be eligible to access these
- Wales BSc programme - need to get an update from KS
- MEd programmes and teaching qualifications - developing a paper on Teacher/Tutor Skills Development which GR will share.
- Progression from the Foundation Degree Medicines Management & Pharmacy Services (Y&H) A number of our pharmacy technicians have gone on to study the following at Y&H Universities:
  - BA Professional Studies (accessed by PCT/Acute)
  - BA Health and Social Care Practice (accessed by PCT/Acute)
  - BA Management (PCT tech)
  - MSc Leadership in Health (PCT tech)

As you can see the needs are very dependant on individual roles - GR will continue to collate any information the group wishes to send.

#### Support work based facilitation – SW/TB

##### Technician Level Framework (TLF)

Jane Hough is chairing a meeting on 20 October to discuss outcomes from the TLF pilot. Changes will be made and the framework will be circulated. An abstract has been accepted for the Autumn UKCPA Symposium. The framework to be circulated to members when it is ready.

#### Eportfolios

EB said that she would provide a demonstration at the next meeting of the eportfolio system South West is using. Sally Kemp has also invited colleagues to come and see how the system is working. London is starting a pilot with a trust using eportfolios for the pharmacy services qualification.

#### Pharmacy Support Staff training in aseptic services – SK/KS/GR

EB fed back on action from the Pre and In-process Working Group. Some minor changes have been made to the Pre and In-process Checking Framework.

**Action:** SK to email updated framework to members

Final checks and release – work is being carried out to develop a framework which could potentially be extended to pharmacy technicians in the future. Contact SK if you have any queries.

### Workforce planning – VE/DW

Pre-registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician (PTPT) completion and destination data is still not complete. This is an important piece of work and data is required nationally. Outstanding information is required from:

- South Central (Thames Valley)
- Scotland
- Wales

**Action:** This information needs to be sent to TB by January 2010

Wales are introducing collaborative websites where information can be shared across organisations. CS will give an update on this at the next meeting.

### 7. Modernising Pharmacy Careers Board

Work streams are on-going. The main focus at present has been the work around supervision.

### 8. Update from Strategy Group

The Focus Event will involve discussions regarding the NHS Pharmacy Staffing and Vacancy Survey, Terms of Reference for the group and MPCB in relation to Medical Education England (MEE).

Presentations will be given by Catherine Duggan regarding the professional leadership body and Sue Ambler for GPhC. The annual report which is based on the group objectives will be sent out at the end of November.

**Action:** VE to send out the annual report distribution list to members to obtain feedback as to whether anybody else should be on it. The report will need to be finalised and circulated before the end of November 2009

### National NHS Pharmacy Staffing Establishment and Vacancy Survey

There was a 100% response rate to this survey. The report will be available in the next couple of weeks. The Department of Health (DoH) have agreed to fund this survey in the future. A coding exercise is being undertaken to ensure accuracy.

### 9. Pharmacy Practice Framework Consultation

Discussed in agenda point 6 - regulation.

### 10. Edexcel update

Unit writing – discussed in agenda point 6 – national projects.

### 11. City & Guilds update

Unit writing – discussed in agenda point 6 – national projects.

### 12. APTUK update

The 2010 APTUK conference, 'Past, present and future, where are you?' will be held on 18 – 20 June at the Cranage Hall in South Manchester.

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Posters for the AAH Pharmacy Technician of the Year Awards 2009 are now available. There are three awards, primary and secondary care, which are project based and professional which is nomination based. TF requested that members promote these awards.

APTUK are working to put a business case together regarding their future role. The main focus of support will be with CPD.

**13. RPSGB Support staff advisory group**

See agenda item 6 regulation and national projects.

**14. Any Other Business**

**Date of next meeting Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010 1.30pm 50, Eastbourne Terrace,  
Paddington – London**

**Receipt of these minutes prior to the date of the next meeting implies that they are  
unconfirmed minutes.**