



Finding a Designated Prescribing Practitioner (DPP) and suitable learning environment guide

In order to qualify as an independent prescriber (IP), pharmacists must complete a [programme accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council](#) (GPhC). The course is typically run part-time over six months and is often delivered through a combination of face-to-face teaching sessions (usually one day per week) and self-directed study (reference 1).

As part of the [Pharmacy Integration Programme 2021-24](#), Health Education England (HEE) is funding independent prescribing training for pharmacists. HEE will only fund the course fees for eligible pharmacists at the [universities outlined on their website](#). (Please note this does not include all the GPhC accredited courses).

All independent prescribing programmes include a minimum of 26 days of teaching and learning activity. In addition to this, each pharmacist must successfully complete at least 12 days of learning in a practice environment while being mentored by a DPP (reference 2).

The definition, role and competencies of a DPP are laid out in the following documents:

- [GPhC Standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers](#). Updated October 2022.
- [GPhC Education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers: evidence framework](#). 2019.
- [The Royal Pharmaceutical Society \(RPS\) Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#). December 2019.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) describes the role of the DPP:
To oversee, support and assess the competence of non-medical prescribing trainees, in collaboration with academic and workplace partners, during the period of learning in practice.

Designated prescribing practitioner (DPP)

The DPP is a healthcare professional in Great Britain or Northern Ireland with legal independent prescribing rights (an annotation or automatic right to prescribe) who will mentor and supervise the pharmacist during the period of learning in practice. Examples include a medical practitioner, pharmacist, nurse, physiotherapist, or paramedic. The DPP will provide a formal confirmation once they are satisfied of the pharmacist's competence in prescribing (reference 3).

The DPP must be suitably experienced and qualified to carry out this supervisory role and have demonstrated CPD or revalidation relevant to this role. The personal characteristics, professional skills & knowledge and teaching and training skills required to be a DPP are described in the [RPS Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#). The professional skills and knowledge required described are:

- Works in line with legal, regulatory, professional and organisational standards.
- Is an experienced prescriber* in a patient-facing role.
- Is an active prescriber** in a patient-facing role, with appropriate knowledge and experience relevant to the trainee's area of clinical practice.
- Has up-to-date patient-facing, clinical and diagnostic skills and evidence of demonstrating competence in an area of practice relevant to the trainee.
- Has knowledge of the scope and legal remit of non-medical prescribing for the NMP trainee's profession.

The IP course provider is ultimately responsible for assessing and approving the suitability of the DPP.

* An experienced prescriber in a patient-facing role is defined as an active prescriber who would normally have at least 3 years' recent prescribing experience in a patient-facing role (reference 4).

** An active prescriber consults with patients and makes prescribing decisions based on clinical assessment with sufficient frequency to maintain competence. Reflects and audits prescribing practice to identify developmental needs (reference 4).

A challenge which pharmacists frequently face is finding a suitable person to be their DPP. This can be a particular challenge for those pharmacists based in community pharmacy who may not be based in the same site with other health professionals.

Finding a DPP

The [GPhC Standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers](#) require a period of at least 90 hours when the trainee PIP practise and develop their clinical, diagnostic and prescribing skills under the supervision of other health or care professionals. When you are seeking a DPP it is important to emphasise to your prospective DPP that a portion of the 90 hours can be under the supervision of other IP health professionals and a proportion of supervised in-practice learning.

Within their [Independent Prescriber guide](#) the RPS provides useful practical guidance to help pharmacists find a suitable DPP. In relation to pharmacists working in primary care or community pharmacy this includes:

- Asking senior members within your organisation to see if they can help you via their networks or provide you with advice.
- Speaking to colleagues who are prescribers or the community pharmacist lead for your Primary Care Network (PCN) as they may be able to assist you in finding a DPP.
- Building relationships with your local PCN, GPs and primary care pharmacy teams by networking and collaborating with them. Then identifying suitably qualified and experienced healthcare professionals who could be your DPP and ask them if they are willing to do this for you.
- Strategies to improve the likelihood of success:
 - Highlighting that health professionals other than doctors or pharmacists can be DPPs, for example nurses, physiotherapists or paramedics, providing they have legal independent prescribing rights (an annotation or automatic right to prescribe).
 - Discussing how being a DPP can benefit their own professional development and portfolio.
 - IP course providers have resources that will help with this including training, appraisal and support as described in the [General Pharmaceutical Council \(GPhC\) Education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers: evidence framework](#). 2019.
 - The RPS also have resources that will help with this within their [Independent Prescriber guide](#).
 - Developing a plan showing benefits to the GP practice and/or PCN of you qualifying as an IP. For example:

- Clinical areas that you could specialise in to help meet the needs of patients and the public in your area.
- How, as an IP, you can help to address health inequalities or needs in your locality.

Other possible approaches include:

- Contacting IP course providers to discuss role of DPPs and ask for advice on finding one.
- Linking up with other pharmacists in your area who are also seeking, or have found, a DPP to see if one DPP might be prepared to take on two (or more) trainees together.
- Contacting your local non-medical prescribing lead (who may be based in a local NHS Hospital Trust) or other NHS organisation eg, Primary Care Training Hub, Local Medical Committee, Integrated Care Board (ICB), or Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) who may be able to advise you of DPPs in the area who you could contact.
- Contacting your local NHS Hospital Trust's Education & Training Pharmacist who may be able to help.
- Seeking a DPP through the RPS [Mentoring platform](#) (members only).

Learning environment

A learning environment is the clinical practice base where a pharmacist is undertaking their learning in practice as part of their independent prescribing course under the supervision of other healthcare professionals, including their DPP, enabling them to develop their clinical, diagnostic and prescribing skills (references 3, 5).

Finding a suitable learning environment

In addition to finding a suitable DPP you will need to consider finding a suitable learning environment for your learning in practice. You should discuss this with any prospective DPPs when you approach them.

Resources:

- The Pharmaceutical Journal. [Community pharmacist independent prescribers can play key role in GP practices, pilot finds](#). February 2018, Vol 300, No 7910;300(7910): DOI:10.1211/PJ.2018.20204339
- The Pharmaceutical Journal. [Pharmacist prescribers improve patient outcomes, review highlights](#). Online:DOI:10.1211/PJ.2018.20205033
- The Pharmaceutical Journal. [How trainee pharmacist independent prescribers can work with their supervisors](#). 8/15 August 2015, Vol 295, No 7874/5;295(7874/5): DOI:10.1211/PJ.2015.20068988.
- Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE) guides:
 - [Being influential](#)
 - [Business cases](#)
- University of Bath [I have been asked to be a DMP! – FAQs](#).
- University of the West of England. [DMP Information Pack](#).

References:

1. [GPhC Pharmacist independent prescriber webpage](#) (last updated 2023).
2. [GPhC Standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers](#). (updated October 2022).
3. General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) [Education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers: evidence framework](#). 2019.
4. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society [Competency Framework for Designated Prescribing Practitioners](#). December 2019.
5. National Prescribing Centre. [Training non-medical prescribers in practice](#). February 2005.