

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer's pharmacy leaders development programme

**Applicant guide for pharmacists working in NI
who access this programme by applying to
NICPLD**

November 2025

Introduction

The Chief Pharmaceutical Officer's (CPhO) pharmacy leaders development programme is for experienced pharmacy professionals who aspire to lead large and complex NHS departments, services, teams or systems of care to benefit patients and local communities.

It aims to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to help experienced pharmacy professionals become outstanding, compassionate and inclusive leaders, and improve the performance of the teams and people who work with them to deliver improved outcomes for patients and the public.

The programme aims to create a cadre of senior pharmacy professionals ready for challenging senior leadership roles and to develop professional networks to sustain their professional leadership practice. A key objective is to make a positive contribution to improving the diversity of those in senior pharmacy professional leadership positions in the NHS.

"I am delighted to support this exciting new programme, which will bring forward the next generation of senior pharmacy professional leaders across the NHS. Pharmacy needs effective and inclusive leaders to shape the delivery of high-quality, compassionate care and excellence in medicines use for patients, and support and motivate integrated, multi-professional teams. This programme supports our work on inclusive pharmacy practice and will ensure that future leaders better reflect the diversity of the pharmacist and pharmacy technician professions."

David Webb, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, NHS England

NOTE

Two places on cohort 11 are available to pharmacists who work in NI who should apply to NICPLD.

NICPLD will notify CPPE of the successful applicants from NI.

Who is the CPhO's pharmacy leaders development programme for in NI?

This programme is for you if:

- You are a pharmacist who already works (or has worked) in a role with responsibility for leading operational and strategic aspects of pharmacy services.
- You have already undertaken formal leadership training and are ready to develop your leadership skills and behaviours further before applying for a more senior position.
- You aspire to take on a more significant leadership role in the delivery of NHS services, and to lead a culture of compassion and inclusion across an organisation or system.
- You have the support of a senior leader in your organisation.

Learning outcomes

On completion of all aspects of this programme, you will be able to:

- develop your self-awareness and resilience by reflecting on who you are as an inclusive leader and evaluate your strengths and areas for development
- identify and implement strategies to improve equality, diversity and inclusion within your team, service or organisation
- inspire your team, service or organisation to deliver inclusive, compassionate, person-centred care for patients and local communities
- build a powerful support network of leaders within pharmacy, across other health and care professions, and with those supporting the delivery of care such as workforce, finance and commissioning
- apply the concept of systems leadership and the behaviours required to lead across systems in order to be visible, provide excellent services, drive forward collaborative working and address health inequalities
- apply the principles of good strategic leadership communications and engagement

The programme has two themes that run throughout: a focus on the 'line of sight' to the quality and experience of those who access health and care services; and a commitment to embed excellence in equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of leadership.

Learning and commitment

The programme lasts nine months and incorporates two residential workshops. This includes:

- a three-day residential workshop at the start of the programme **10 to 12 Feb 2026**
- a virtual impact group meeting (one day, approximately in month 6)
- a two-day residential workshop at the end of the programme **10 + 11 Nov 2026**
- the opportunity to attend up to four online specialist study days
- the opportunity to attend up to one online insight day
- online interaction via discussion forums
- a work-based leadership challenge/project
- presentation of a critical reflection on your learning from the workplace-based project.

Residential workshops

There are five days of residential workshops, three at the beginning of the programme and two at the end. The focus of these workshops will be on your personal and behavioural development. The workshops use group work, experiential learning and simulation activities. We recommend that you take full advantage of the networking opportunities provided by the residential workshops.

During the residential workshops, you will work with a trained facilitator in impact groups (small groups of up to six participants) to explore the links between individual, group, organisational and system dynamics.

Attendance at these residential workshops, including staying overnight, is mandatory. The course fees, including accommodation, are funded by the NHS. Travel will need to be paid for individually. Please make sure you have sign-off from your line manager to attend all five days before accepting your offer of a place on the programme.

The residentials will be held at **Warwick University**.

Work-based leadership challenge/project

As part of this programme, you must lead and implement a significant change in your service or organisation that links to one or more of the learning outcomes for the programme and involves

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working with people outside the pharmacy team or department. We particularly encourage you to consider system-wide projects that aim to reduce health inequalities. You will need to agree this with your line manager or a senior leader in your organisation in advance of applying to join the programme.

At the final workshop, you will present a critical reflection on your learning from leading this project. Your critical reflection should also demonstrate how your learning and development from the programme have served to improve experiences and outcomes for staff, or for the people who use your services.

As the programme relies on your ability to apply your learning in the workplace, it is essential that you have the support of your line manager or a senior leader in your organisation who can commit the resources needed for you to complete the programme. We recommend that you agree with your line manager or senior leader (supporter) how they will support you to protect the time you need to attend the mandatory residential workshops and implement your workplace-based project. It is essential that your supporter can provide regular mentoring and is available for guidance and support.

There are in total 30 places available for each cohort. **In cohort 11 starting in February, there are two places available to pharmacists working in NI.**

If you are offered a place, before attending the first residential workshop, you will be required to:

- obtain and reflect on feedback from colleagues within and/or outside your team, service or organisation
- agree with your supporter a work-based leadership challenge/project that you will lead and implement during the programme
- register and post in the online discussion forum
- undertake the CPPE e-learning programme [Culturally competent communication in person-centred care](#) . Successful applicants from NI will be provided with free access to this course.

If your application is successful, and you accept the place on this programme, NICPLD will pay your programme fee directly to CPPE. If you cancel from the programme after accepting your offer, or if you do not attend the full five days of residential workshops, NICPLD will charge you the delegate cost of the residential place. The fee covers the programme cost and the cost of accommodation and food at the residentials at Warwick university. Successful applicants will be responsible for their own travel. The most convenient way to get to Warwick University is to fly to Birmingham airport and travel by train to Coventry.

Application process

To apply for this programme, you will need to complete the online application form on the NICPLD website, upload a copy of your CV and upload your personal statement written on the template provided. Please include contact details for your line manager or supporter as we may need to contact them to discuss your application.

Please note that, to maintain anonymity, we do not look at your CV until after scoring your personal statement. Therefore, it is vital that you include all relevant information, including your job title and role, in your personal statement.

Completing your application

Please read this guidance fully, then download and read the template personal statement form before you start.

This will help you understand what sort of information the assessment panel wants to see, and how you can provide the evidence to support your statement.

Make sure you allow enough time to complete your personal statement. Incomplete applications, applications that do not use the template form or those received after the deadline will not be considered.

Personal statement

Your personal statement is an important part of your application and should explain why you are interested in developing your leadership, your relevant experience and any previous leadership training. Applications are scored by a panel, so your statement must provide a coherent and compelling argument for why you should have a place. Applications are scored anonymously so please do not add your name or the name of your workplace to your personal statement. Please note that we do not look at your CV until after scoring your personal statement, so you must provide all relevant information in the questions below, including your job title.

A recommended word count guide is included for each statement question. You will be penalised for exceeding the word count significantly.

Your statement should answer the following:

1. Tell us about your current role and the team(s), projects or types of work that you lead, including your responsibilities for managing people and budgets. (100 words)

This programme is aimed primarily at pharmacy professionals who have responsibility for leading multiple teams or large departments and for managing significant budgets. The panel is looking for evidence that applying for a very senior role would be an appropriate next step in your career. In your current role, you should be leading people who manage other people or other teams, and you should have responsibility for managing significant budgets. If you have just taken on your first leadership role, or lead a small team, a different leadership programme may be more appropriate for you at this stage in your career.

When answering this question, you may want to consider telling us about any strategic roles you hold in your organisation. This may be areas of work that you lead on, projects or priorities that you decide about, or decisions you make about what your team or organisation work on.

You might also consider including examples of the outcomes of projects you have led or developed.

2. What are your career aspirations and where do you see yourself in five years' time? (100 words)

The CPhO's *pharmacy leaders development programme* is not about helping you do your current job better: it is about preparing you to take on a more senior pharmacy leadership role. It is aimed at pharmacy professionals who aspire to lead large and complex NHS departments, services, teams or systems of care to benefit patients and local communities. In your response to this question, we want to see that you are passionate about moving forward with your career and aspire to take on a more senior role in your current organisation or in another NHS organisation or system.

The panel is looking for evidence that you have ambitions to lead at the highest level, for example, to become, Chief Pharmacist, Professional Head of Pharmacy GP Federations, Superintendent large organisation, Operations Director etc.

3. What formal leadership training have you undertaken already? (50 words)

This programme focuses on your personal and behavioural development and relies on you having undertaken some formal leadership training before you attend. The panel is looking for evidence that you have completed formal leadership training, such as one of the HSC Leadership Centre programmes, modules from a postgraduate master's programme; an Institute of Leadership and Management qualification or PrescQIPP leadership course. Quality-assured external leadership programmes will score more highly than in-house or informal training because we are unable to evaluate the content.

4. Tell us about your most significant learning experience that has changed the way you work and behave. (100 words)

The CPhO's pharmacy leaders development programme uses experiential learning techniques which involve participation in a series of activities followed by reflection using Boyatzis' model of self-directed intentional change. In your impact group, you will explore your real and ideal self and your strengths and gaps, plan your learning agenda and practise new behaviours. In your response to this question, we are looking for your ability to reflect on and learn from your experiences and change the way you practise as a result. The learning experience that you describe does not have to be a formal learning experience: it could be a patient-safety incident, a conversation with a patient or carer, or a discussion with another healthcare professional.

When answering this question, you may wish to reflect on feedback that you received which changed how you lead or manage your team, or you may consider what you learned about yourself or about how you lead and manage people.

This is an example of a reflective statement that the panel would score highly because it shows how the applicant changed the way they practise following feedback:

'Whilst launching a new COVID vaccination clinic, a senior team member undermined my decision and I responded angrily, damaging our relationship. I undertook conflict management and challenging conversations training. I learnt about assertiveness and different influencing styles. As I practised these techniques, I strengthened my ability to involve service users and colleagues in shared decision making, negotiating and problem-solving. Meetings became more efficient and team members felt empowered to take ownership and responsibility. Feedback indicated I listened and trusted others more and successfully led the vaccination service. I hope to use a wider range of influencing styles over time.'

5. Why have you chosen to apply for the CPhO's pharmacy leaders development programme and why now? What will you bring to the programme? (150 words)

There are three parts to this question, and you will need to answer all three parts in your response.

1. There are many leadership programmes available for pharmacy professionals, including those listed above. In your response, please tell us why you have chosen the CPhO's pharmacy leaders development programme specifically – what is it about this particular programme that appeals to you? How do the learning outcomes for the programme relate to how you wish to develop as a senior leader?

2. Why is this the right time for you to attend the programme? For example, have you recently stepped up into a new, more senior role? Are you ready to apply for a more senior or more strategic role in another area of practice? Have you identified compassionate and inclusive leadership as a development need?

Please make sure you are available for both residentials before applying to the programme. If you are offered a place and subsequently decline it due to calendar conflicts, we will not transfer your place to a future cohort.

3. As well as telling us what you hope to achieve from the programme, tell us what you will bring to the group that will help other participants with their leadership challenges, such as your specialist knowledge, skills or experience.

This is an example of what you might bring to the programme:

'I bring over 15 years' experience working as a pharmacist in community, primary and secondary care. I have a wide professional network across all sectors, which may help others on the programme with finding relevant contacts.'

6. It is important that you begin the programme having already explored with your line manager or supporter opportunities for leading change in your workplace. Please describe your work-based leadership challenge/project and how it links to the learning outcomes for this programme. (100 words)

We are looking for work-based leadership challenges/projects that have an impact beyond your immediate team or department, and that require you to work with other professions or leaders. You will need to describe how the change you are leading differs from the normal requirements of your job and how it provides some stretch for you. You will also need to describe how it links to one or more of the programme's learning outcomes. Your leadership challenge/project should have a clear aim and it should be possible for us to assess whether you have met this aim by the end of the programme.

Some examples of leadership challenges/projects submitted by previous successful applicants include:

- implement a virtual ward
- develop a strategy for joint working for hospital and primary care pharmacy professionals across an ICS
- reconfigure the discharge service to be patient-centric and follow the patient journey
- improve access to specialist drugs for underserved communities
- implement a public health intervention across boundaries for an underserved population

- embed equality, diversity and inclusion into recruitment processes across an organisation
- implement different patient pathways to overcome capacity issues in an outpatient department
- lead replacement of the pharmacy robot.

Demographic data

In line with the programme's aim of improving equality, diversity and inclusion in the NHS's senior pharmacy professional leadership positions, we will take positive action to recruit a diverse range of pharmacy professionals to each cohort. We particularly welcome applications from ethnic minority backgrounds. In addition, this programme is open to pharmacists in NI working in senior roles across the NHS, including NHS Trusts, GP Federation, and community pharmacy.

For these reasons, we will ask you to provide information about your gender, ethnicity, sector of practice and geographical location.

We encourage you to disclose any learning difference, disability or reasonable adjustments that will enable us to get the best from you during the programme.

Please note that this programme is open to pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in GB but currently open to pharmacists only in NI. We anticipate this will change when pharmacy technicians become registered in NI.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

I am not able to stay overnight. Can I still apply for the programme?

The networking aspect of this programme is critical to achieving the learning outcomes. If you are unable to stay overnight, you will not be able to participate in the programme. If you are offered a place on the programme and then tell us you are unable to stay, we will withdraw our offer.

Can two learners who work at the same organisation/Trust attend the same cohort?

No. One of the aims of the programme is to encourage people to build new contacts and networks, and we try to ensure that cohorts consist of people from diverse geographies and sectors.

One of the requirements of the programme is that learners undertake a work-based leadership challenge/project, which will be supported by their line manager. We would not expect a line

manager to support more than one of these work-based leadership challenges/projects at once, so allocating learners who work together to different cohorts will support this.

Learners who work together are also allocated to different cohorts to support organisational resilience, so two people from the same organisation are not away from work at the residentials at the same time.

Is accommodation available the night before the start of each residential?

Accommodation is not provided at the conference venue the night before the start of each residential.

If you need accommodation the night before, please contact the venue directly to arrange and pay for it; alternatively, there may be some budget options available in Coventry.

What time do the residential days start and finish?

All days start promptly and finish at the time stated.

Residential 1 10 to 12 Feb 2026:

- Day 1: 10:00am to 5:30pm (registration and coffee from 9:30am)
- Day 2: 8:30am to 5:30pm
- Day 3: 8:30am to 5:00pm

Residential 2 10 + 11 Nov 2026:

- Day 1: 09:30 to 5:30pm (registration and coffee from 9:00am)
- Day 2: 9:00am to 5:00pm

I am not available for the dates of one of the residentials. Can I still apply for the programme?

No. We expect this programme to be heavily oversubscribed, so only apply if you can commit to the dates for both residentials. This programme represents significant investment in leadership development and succession planning in NI so you must be fully committed. If you are offered a place and subsequently decline it due to calendar conflicts, we may not be able to offer your place to another candidate, resulting in both a missed opportunity for another candidate and inefficient use of NHS resources.

Am I expected to eat in the evening with the other delegates?

Yes, you are expected to eat with the group of delegates, and to use the time to network.

How much downtime is there during the residential?

There are short comfort breaks, and a lunch break each day. We recommend that delegates use the time to network with each other in these breaks. If you need to make essential calls, you will be able to do so in the breaks. There is a break on Day 1 and Day 2 between 5:30pm and the evening meal at 7:30pm, when you will also have downtime. You can expect to be with your cohort colleagues all day and until 9:00pm to 9:30pm.

Before residential 1, we are asked to obtain and reflect on feedback from colleagues in/and outside our team, service or organisation. How am I expected to do this?

When you have accepted your place on the cohort, CPPE will provide you with a link to an electronic multi-source feedback tool. You will use the tool to email colleagues a set of reflective questions about your leadership. The responses are gathered electronically, and you will be given access to a report containing your feedback during residential 1.

Do I need to complete a self-assessment as part of multi-source feedback?

You must complete the self-assessment section of the multi-source feedback tool so you can compare how you rate your own leadership with how your colleagues rate it. This is an essential step in the process. If you fail to complete your self-assessment, the IT system will not release your feedback report.

How long do I have to seek the feedback from my colleagues in preparation for residential 1?

Once you have accepted your place on the cohort, we will send you the link to the electronic multi-source feedback tool. You will have approximately two weeks to collect the electronic feedback from colleagues.

The application guide mentions impact groups. What is an impact group?

An impact group is a small group of delegates (about six people) who will work together during the first residential and then continue to work together through the next nine months of the programme.