

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026



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1.0 Executive Summary

The Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development (NICPLD) has continued to deliver a comprehensive programme of pharmacy education during the 2025–2026 Commission, supporting the development of a skilled, adaptable and patient-centred pharmacy workforce across Northern Ireland.

This year has been characterised by significant system-wide change, driven by the full implementation of the General Pharmaceutical Council's 2021 standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists. NICPLD has played a central role in operationalising these reforms, including the management of experiential learning, the delivery and quality management of the Foundation Training Year (FTY), and preparations for the annotation of newly qualified pharmacists as independent prescribers from 2026.

Across all areas of activity, learner engagement and programme delivery have continued to grow. A total of 182 trainee pharmacists entered the FTY in 2025–2026, representing the first cohort trained under the new standards. NICPLD successfully secured six-year accreditation of the FTY programme and implemented a new regional selection process, ensuring a fair, robust and transparent approach to trainee selection.

Experiential Learning (EL) continued to expand in impact, supporting over 700 student pharmacists across community, hospital and general practice settings. Learner feedback demonstrates high levels of satisfaction, with 98% reporting a positive placement experience and 95% increased confidence in professional skills.

NICPLD's post-registration provision remained a key component of workforce development. The Post-registration Foundation Programme (PRFP) continued to support early career pharmacists, with strong pass rates and high levels of engagement. In parallel, development of a new Enhanced Practice Pharmacist Programme is underway, ensuring alignment with emerging UK-wide curricula and future workforce needs.

The Independent Prescribing (IP) programme maintained strong performance, with high completion rates and positive learner feedback. Targeted funding initiatives have successfully supported increased access for community pharmacists, contributing to the expansion of prescribing capability across the system.

A broad programme of continuing professional development was delivered through both eLearning and live events. During the Commission, over 12,500 eLearning modules were completed, equating to more than 42,000 hours of learning. Evaluation data demonstrates consistently high quality across provision, with strong satisfaction levels and clear alignment to workforce learning needs.

NICPLD has also strengthened its national and regional profile through active engagement in key professional and regulatory groups, contributions to education research, and dissemination of innovation through conference presentations and publications.

Financially, NICPLD delivered its full programme of work within a £3.0 million Commission, maintaining strong governance and assurance processes throughout.

Looking ahead, NICPLD is well positioned to support the continued transformation of pharmacy practice. Priorities for the next Commission include supporting the embedding of independent prescribing across the workforce, launching the Enhanced Practice Pharmacist Programme, expanding digital and AI-enabled learning, increasing the provision for pharmacy technicians and continuing to strengthen partnerships across the health and higher education sectors.

Overall, NICPLD has demonstrated strong performance during 2025–2026, delivering high-quality education, supporting workforce transformation, and contributing to improved health outcomes for the population of Northern Ireland.

2.0 Postgraduate Pharmacy Dean's Foreward

I am pleased to present the Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development (NICPLD) Annual Report for the 2025–2026 Commission.

This has been a significant year for pharmacy education and workforce development, as the full implementation of the 2021 standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists continues to reshape the profession. These changes are transforming how pharmacists are trained and how they will practise in the future, with a clear shift towards enhanced clinical capability and the introduction of independent prescribing at the point of registration.

NICPLD has played a central role in supporting this transition across Northern Ireland. Working in close partnership with the Department of Health, universities, regulators, supervisors and employers, we have continued to deliver high-quality education and training that meets the evolving needs of learners, the pharmacy workforce and the wider health and social care system.

This report highlights the breadth and impact of our work over the past year. We have expanded experiential learning opportunities for student pharmacists, delivered a newly accredited Foundation Training Year, and supported pharmacists at all stages of their careers through a wide range of post-registration and continuing professional development programmes. We have begun to transform the services we offer for pharmacy technicians and will continue this focus into the next Commission. Across all areas, our focus remains on enabling pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to deliver safe, effective and person-centred care.

Collaboration remains at the heart of our approach. I would like to thank our partners across healthcare, academia and the profession for their continued support and contribution. I am also particularly grateful to the NICPLD team for their dedication, expertise and commitment throughout a year of significant change and delivery. The staff team are highly committed and make NICPLD a great place to work.

As we look ahead, our priorities are clear. We will continue to support the implementation of independent prescribing, develop new pathways for enhanced practice, and invest in digital and innovative approaches to learning. Above all, we remain committed to supporting a confident, capable and future-focused pharmacy workforce that can meet the needs of the population we serve.

I hope you find this report informative and reflective of the progress made during the 2025–2026 Commission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Smith', with a stylized, cursive script.

Lisa Smith

Postgraduate Pharmacy Dean

3.0 Communications, collaborations and education research

3.1 Social media communications

NICPLD uses a range of social media platforms shown in Figure 1 to engage with the pharmacy professions.

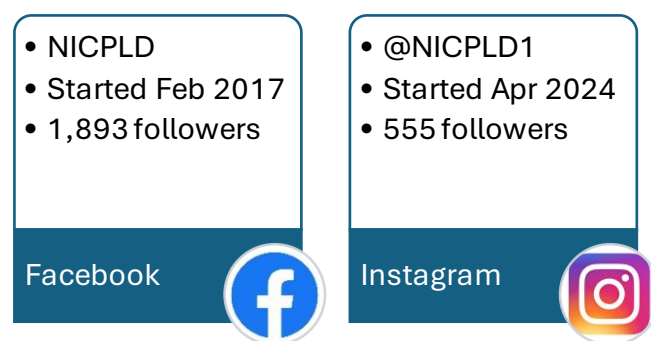


Figure 1: Social media platforms used by NICPLD

NICPLD no longer uses X. This decision reflects Queen's University Belfast's commitment to ensuring that communications take place in spaces that are respectful, inclusive, and aligned with university values.

A LinkedIn channel will be introduced in 2026/27. A funded undergraduate student intern has been secured and will join NICPLD for 90 hours during summer 2026 to support the launch of the LinkedIn profile.

Social media posts are used to promote and provide information, for example:

- Advertising webinars, workshops and eLearning courses from the live and open learning programmes
- Delivering medicines and healthcare calculation practice
- Advertising the workforce development programmes
- Updating the pharmacy profession on the workforce development programmes

- Advertising vacancies within NICPLD and welcoming new members of staff to NICPLD team
- Sharing surveys e.g. learning needs assessment, supervisor expression of interest

NICPLD's social media following continues to grow and Figure 2 shows examples of social media posts issued during this Commission.

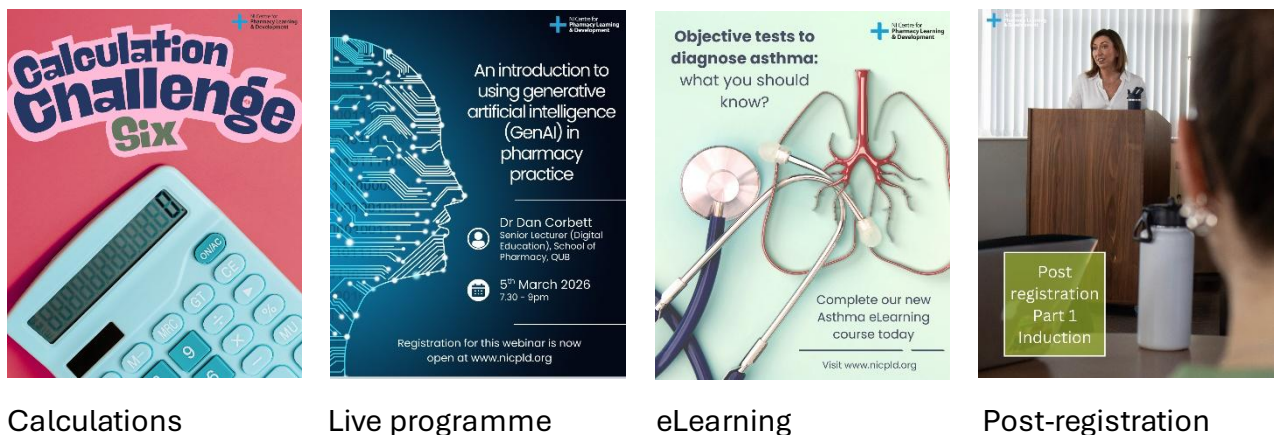


Figure 2: Examples of social media posts

3.2 NICPLD newsletter

Three editions of the NICPLD newsletter were published. Each newsletter was emailed to approximately 4,000 pharmacists and pharmacy technicians registered with NICPLD and was also made available on the NICPLD [website](#). From December 2025, a new newsletter format, created using Canva, was introduced to improve accessibility.

3.3 Websites

NICPLD manages two separate websites. Pharmacy users access the [NICPLD](#) website and other healthcare professionals access the [Medicines NI](#) website.

The NICPLD website serves as a central hub for pharmacy education in NI, offering access to programme information, learner portfolios, dedicated learner hubs, as well as our online booking system and application forms.

To improve inclusivity, [social media posts](#) are available on the NICPLD website enabling learners without social media accounts to access important information. A [calendar](#) function helps users see at a glance what is happening each month including important deadlines for education programme applications.

The medicinesNI website for other healthcare professionals provides access to eLearning and webinar recordings, and to the workshop/webinar booking function. A separate annual report for the medicinesNI website is available on request.

3.4 Consultation responses

NICPLD provided formal responses to the following consultations:

- Royal Pharmaceutical Society (now Royal College of Pharmacy) iterative consultations on the enhanced practice pharmacist curriculum
- General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) consultation on the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians December 2025
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society (now Royal College of Pharmacy) consultation on a pharmacogenomic competency resource for all prescribers January 2026

3.5 National and regional collaboration

NICPLD staff actively contributed to the following groups, committees, boards and panels during the 2025/26 Commission period:

- Conference of Pharmacy Education Deans CoPED – national
- GPhC Accreditation and Recognition panels (MPharm, FTY, IP programmes) – national
- GPhC Advisory Group on IET – national
- GPhC Advisory Group on IETPT – national
- GPhC Advisory Group on post assurance of practice – national
- GPhC Board of Assessors – national
- HSC Staff Digital Capacity and Capability group – regional
- Living Well sub-group – regional
- NIHR-Incubator for Pharmacy Professionals – national
- NI Multiprofessional Advanced Practice Network steering group – regional

- Northern Ireland Committee for Pharmacy Education and Training (NICPET) – regional
- Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland Code of Ethics Review Group – regional
- Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland Pharmacist Prescribing Panel – regional
- Pharmacy Research Advisory Group – national
- Pharmacy Research Advisory Group subgroup workforce – national
- Pharmacy Schools Council Entrustable Professional Activities working group – national
- Pharmacy Technician Education Subgroup – regional
- Pharmacy Technician Regulation & Development (PTRD) project – regional
- Pharmacy Workforce Review Steering Group – regional
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society Pharmacogenomic Competency Resource for all Prescribers Task and Finish Group – national
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society Post Registration Curriculum Review Steering Group – national
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society Post Registration Curriculum Review Task and Finish Group – national
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society (now Royal College of Pharmacy) Post Registration Curriculum Implementation group – national
- RPS (now Royal College of Pharmacy) Advanced Pharmacist Assessment Panel (APAP) – national
- RPS (now Royal College of Pharmacy) Advanced Pharmacist Competency Committee (APCC) panels – national
- RPS (now Royal College of Pharmacy) Consultant Pharmacist Post Approval panels – national
- RPS (now Royal College of Pharmacy) Designated prescribing practitioner competency framework Task and Finish group – national
- RPS (now Royal College of Pharmacy) Foundation Pharmacist Assessment Panel – national
- Short Life Working Group for IET reform – regional
- Simulation Based Education Strategic Framework Working Group – regional
- Task and Finish group for FTY selection – regional
- UK Pharmacy Professional Leadership Advisory Board – Pharmacy Stakeholder Forum – national
- Yellow Card Champion network – regional

3.6 Presentation and publication

Presentations and publications within this Commission period included:

- M Conlon, H Bell NICPLD. Collaboration with patients and trainees in designing the foundation training year curriculum. Royal Pharmaceutical Society Conference, London November 2025. Poster presentation
- Spence₁ C, McBride₁ E, Smith₂ L, Corbett₁ D. ₁School of Pharmacy, QUB, ₂ NICPLD. Using proprietary Generative AI (GenAI) platforms to produce pharmaceutical calculation questions. Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 workshop presentation [Conference abstracts](#)
- Allen D, Shaw C, Smith L NICPLD. Using social media to improve calculation competency. Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 poster snapshot oral presentation [Conference abstracts](#)
- Fay A, O’Loan L NICPLD. Introducing Action Learning Sets into Advanced Pharmacy Practice development programmes in NI. Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 Poster presentation
- Young D, Lloyd F, Bell H, Evans W NICPLD. Development of a bespoke eLearning series to equip foundation trainee pharmacists and pharmacist supervisors to understand roles in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 Poster presentation
- O’Rourke C, Allen D, Gichuhi M, Tomlinson C, Roberts J, Lloyd F, Bell H NICPLD. Development of an eLearning course to support Designated Prescribing Practitioners during 2025/26 Foundation Training year. Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 Poster presentation
- Shaw C, Little P, Smith S, Allen D, Roberts J, Gichuhi M, Lloyd F, Bell H NICPLD. Development of an eLearning course to support the development of prescribing skills during the Foundation Training Year. Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 Poster snapshot oral presentation
- Rogers₁ L, Brown₂ J, McKeown₁ C, O’Loan₁ L ₁ NICPLD, ₂ MOIC. What is effective professional practice for early career pharmacists. International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Conference Copenhagen 2025 Oral presentation Pharmacy Education (2025) 25(4) 1-109
<https://pharmacyeducation.fip.org/pharmacyeducation/article/view/3405/2102>
- Fay A_{1,2}, Lowry₃ D ₁ NICPLD, ₂ Lisburn Federation of Family Practices, ₃ University of Ulster. Exploring the role of the Educational Supervisor in Pharmacist Professional Development within General Practice (NI) Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 oral presentation [Conference abstracts](#)
- McAree D₁, Cornford D₂, Smith R₃ ₁ NICPLD, ₂ SPPG, ₃ DoH Development of an open learning course to support community pharmacists preparing to use the

Northern Ireland Electronic Care Record (NIECR) Pharmacy Education Conference, Manchester June 2025 Poster presentation

- Smith L, NICPLD Future Focused Leadership and Pharmacy Innovation, Advanced Specialist Pharmacist Networking Day, Dublin March 2026 keynote
- Doherty S, Forsyth P, Rauchhaus P, Bond C, Roberts S, Brown J, O’Loan L, Marra F, Oakley J, Sehrawat M, Roberts D, & Radley, A.
Are UK pharmacists ready for advanced-level practice? A cross-sectional survey of self-assessed development needs.
International Journal of Pharmacy Practice, 2025 Advance online publication, riaf085. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpp/riaf085>
- Rajiah K, Hanna LA, Smith L, O’Hare R, Courtenay A, Lowry D, Pharmacy education, practice, and research in Northern Ireland: current status and future directions, *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice*, Volume 34, Issue 2, April 2026, Pages 162–172, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpp/riag005>

4.0 Workforce development programmes

4.1 Experiential Learning (EL)

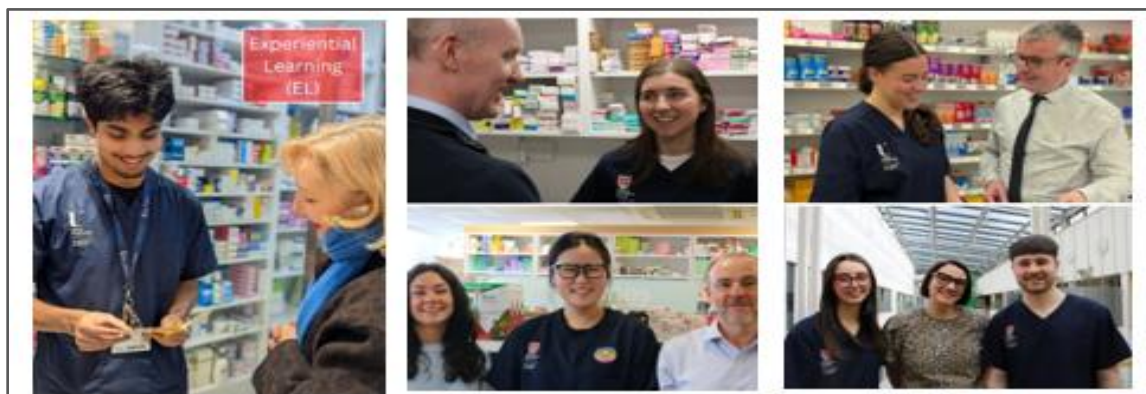


Figure 3: Photographs from EL in 2025-2026

NICPLD are responsible for the development and quality management of the EL programme working in partnership with Queen’s University, Ulster University and the NI Clinical Education Pharmacist (CEP) Team. The regional administrative team and the digital infrastructure for EL is hosted at NICPLD for all placements. The senior pharmacist leads for community pharmacy EL and general practice pharmacy EL are based at NICPLD while the CEP Team who support placements in hospital pharmacy are employed by the hospital Trusts.

The EL Hub, hosted on NICPLD's website, houses a wide variety of information and resources for students and for supervisors.



NI Centre for
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Enhancing Patient Care through Training

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Experiential Learning

EL

InPlace will be used as the student pharmacist EL placement portal, and all EL placement information will be visible to both student pharmacists and EL providers on the portal. This information can be accessed by clicking on the button below.



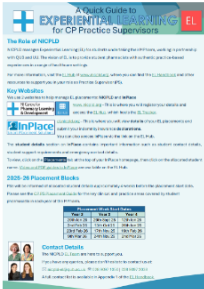
Welcome to the Experiential Learning (EL) Hub where all resources relating to the programme will be hosted. The Hub is accessible only to student pharmacists and to their Practice Supervisor (PS) and provides easy access to all resources that will be required for the experiential learning placements in the different practice settings.

There is a dedicated team to guide student pharmacists and PSs in all sectors through the undergraduate EL placement programme. We look forward to supporting student pharmacists and PSs in providing meaningful and integrated EL.

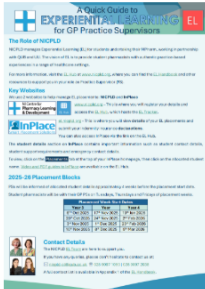
Quick Guides



Quick Guide to EL for Student Pharmacists



Quick Guide to EL for CP Practice Supervisors



Quick Guide to EL for GP Practice Supervisors

Experiential Learning Resources

- Home
- InPlace
- InPlace Guides and Videos
- EL Team
- Communication
- EL Handbook
- EL Student Privacy Notice
- Practice Supervision Guide
- Community Pharmacy Placement Guide
- GP/PS/NI IET Standards
- Placement Timetables
- EL Forms
- Indemnity Insurance
- EL Provider/PS Declarations
- Health and Safety
- Reporting a Concern
- EL Feedback Form

Placement Resources

- EL Tracker
- EL Tracker Reports
- EL Tracker User Guide
- Learning Outcomes for EL
- Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs)
- Audit EPAs
- EPA Videos
- EPA Toolkit

Practice Supervisor Resources

- Webinars / Recordings
- Development Resources



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Contact us




Figure 4: Home screen of the EL Hub designed for students, university staff and supervisors

New practice supervisors receive training before beginning to supervise and all supervisors receive an update annually.

Student pharmacists consistently report receiving a warm welcome and orientation to their placement sites (98%) and following EL, report increased confidence and competence in their professional skills (95%). Practice Supervisors report that student pharmacists are able to contribute to the pharmacy or practice team even during a short time period.

The EL Tracker acts as a secure repository for the student pharmacists' Entrustable Professional Activities (EPA) feedback templates. The EL Tracker reporting functionality allows NICPLD, student pharmacists, university staff and the CEP Team to monitor student progress and view evidence of EPA achievement. Each year, NICPLD undertake an audit to provide assurance that EL Tracker completion standards are met. In 2026 the records of 324 students were audited across Level 2 to 4 and confirmed a high level of compliance.

EL Tracker user satisfaction is high. The results from 389 student responses are shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Student Pharmacist response to ease of use and navigation of the EL Tracker

Placements were provided for student pharmacists as shown in Table 1. A small number of students with exceptional circumstances attend supplemental weeks of EL in May/June 2026.

Due to limited capacity within general practice resulting in reduced placements, an additional week of placement was provided in community pharmacy during the 2025/26 academic year.

Table 1: Placement timetable for the academic year 2025-26

	Community Pharmacy	Hospital Pharmacy	General Practice Pharmacy
Level 2 (264 students)	1 week	3 days	n/a
Level 3 (267 students)	1 week	2 weeks	1.5 days
Level 4 (244 students)	2 weeks	2 weeks	3 days
Total placement weeks	1019	1181	226.5

Whilst on placement, student pharmacists were supervised and supported to complete EPAs. Those completed in 2025-26 are shown in Figure 6.

Year 2		
Community Pharmacy		Hospital
Medication Counselling	Medication History	
Medication-related query	Patient-specific calculation	
Patient Safety Audit	Evaluating clinical improvement / worsening	
Checking prescriptions		
Assessing presenting signs and symptoms		
Year 3		
Community Pharmacy	Hospital	General Practice
Medication Counselling	Medication History	Medicines reconciliation
Medication Counselling	Medication History	
Medication-related query	Patient History	
Patient-specific calculation	Medicines Reconciliation	
Checking prescriptions	Medication Review	
Assessing presenting signs and symptoms	Evaluating clinical improvement / worsening	
	Medication-related query	
Year 4		
Community Pharmacy	Hospital	General Practice
Week 1		
Medication Counselling	Patient History	Medicines reconciliation
Medication-related query	Medicines Reconciliation	Medicines Review
Patient-specific calculation	Medication Review	
Checking prescriptions	Prescribe Medicines	
Assessing presenting signs and symptoms	Supervise and entrust learners	
	Discharge planning from hospital	
Community Pharmacy		
Week 2		
Medication Counselling		
Public Health Intervention		
Patient Safety Audit		
Checking prescriptions		
Assessing presenting signs and symptoms		

Figure 6: EPAs completed in 2025-26 academic year

Two research projects, including ethics approval, were undertaken during the Commission:

- I. Development of an audit EPA in community pharmacy
- II. Student pharmacists take action on the social determinants of health (co funded by NICPLD and CW Young fund from Pharmacy Forum NI)

I. The audit EPA was successfully introduced in community pharmacy with over 500 audits completed by Year 2 and Year 4 students across a range of sector relevant topics.

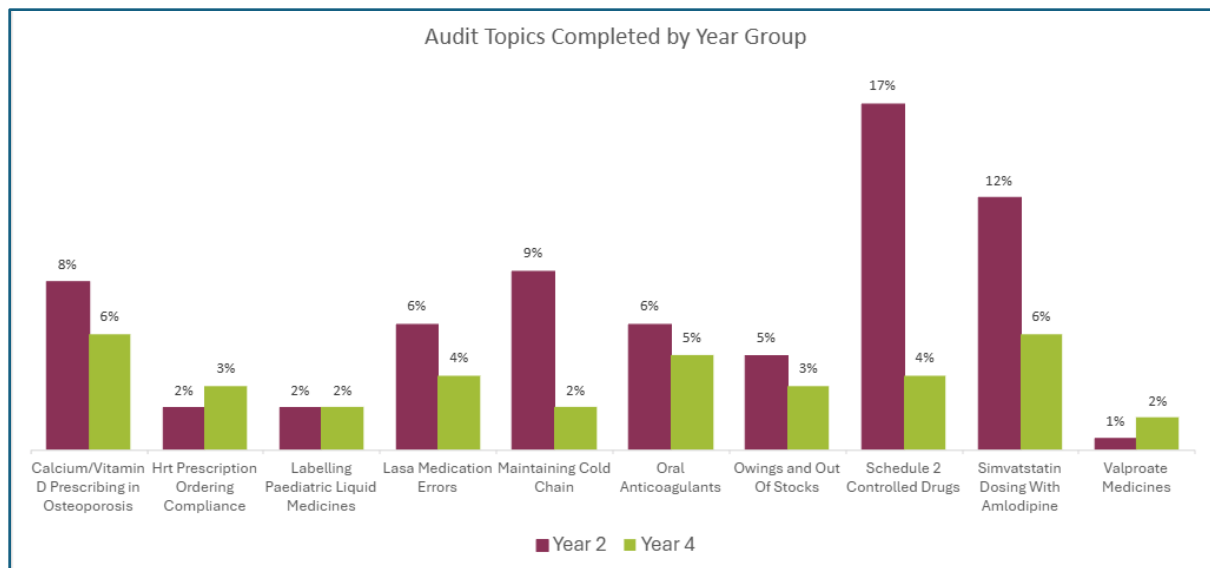


Figure 7: Range of Audit Topics completed by Year 2 and 4 students in Community Pharmacy.

The resulting actions from the audit EPA contribute to the positive impacts that student pharmacists have on community pharmacy patient safety procedures and person-centred care.

Audit EPA agreed actions with Practice Supervisor (data from anonymous student survey)					
COMMON THEMES	DOACs	Owings / Out of Stock	Calcium/Vit D with Bisphosphonates	Valproate	Paed Liq Medicine Labelling
Staff awareness and communication	- Audit confirmed DOAC prescribing to guidelines in relation to patient safety - New Rx for gastroprotection due to identified DOAC and NSAID interaction	- Review and ordering - Alternatives for long term OOS - Patient/staff communication around owings notes and labelling	- Raised awareness - Communicate GP Practice - Triggered medication review	- Led team meeting to discuss valproate patient counselling - Learn more about valproate risks - Identified future audit for male patients	- Update SOPs - Communicate GP Practice
PS/Student communication with GP/GPP and medication review triggered					
SOPs reviewed and updated	LASA - Team huddles – raise awareness of LASAs in Near Miss Log - Physical separation - Alert stickers - Tall Man Lettering	CDs - Maintain identified good practice - Continue with CD record keeping procedures - Focus on counselling patients at handout of CDs	HRT Prescribing - Raised awareness of prescribing guidelines - Patient counselling to improve compliance	Simvastatin / Amlodipine Dosing - Communication GPP - Student/PS awareness of interactions for clinical checks - Switches to atorvastatin or lower dose simvastatin	Cold chain - Star system for all fridge lines to indicate short-dated products - to improve stock control, reduce waste, and ensure patient safety - Warning sign alerting staff not to unplug the fridge
Practical actions in pharmacy to improve patient safety (quick wins)					

Figure 8: Summary of identified Audit EPA actions

II. Student pharmacists take action on the social determinants of health.

A key priority of the [Health and Social Care NI Reset Plan](#) is a transition to a neighbourhood model of care, with integrated teams working collaboratively within local communities. This project supported that ambition by enabling student pharmacists in Northern Ireland to experience first-hand the services provided by Healthy Living Centres, strengthening the public health focus and equipping learners to promote inclusive, population-level health and contribute to healthier communities.

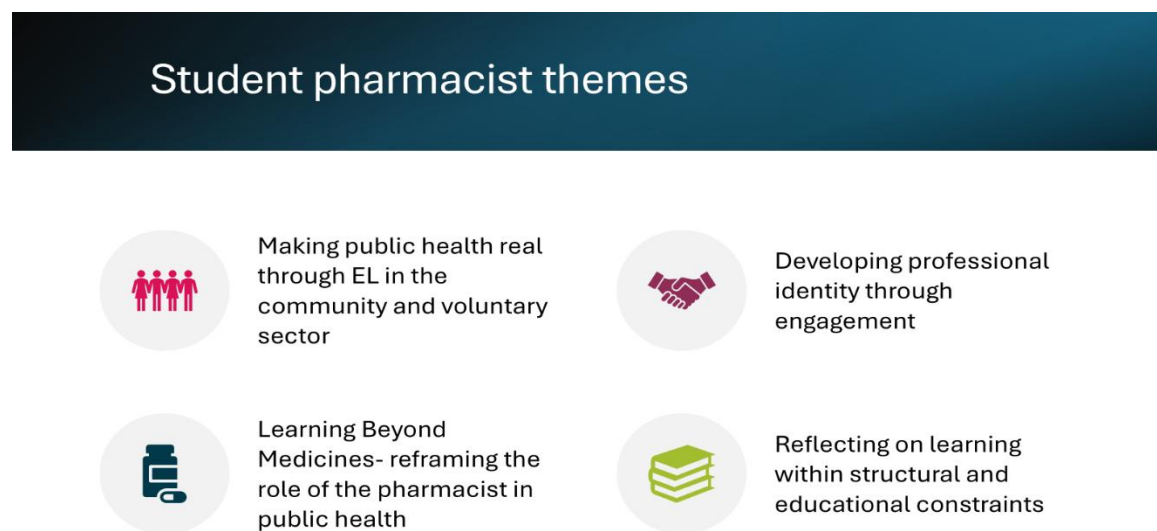


Figure 9: Student pharmacist themes following EL in a Healthy Living Centre

Student pharmacists reported that they valued learning more about the non-pharmacological approaches to health and the added value of lifestyle and social activities. Taking part in the project also supported development of their professional identity through engagement with participants and teams in the Healthy Living Centres.

Teams within the Healthy Living Centres reported positive affirmation in taking part in this research and themes identified by the Centres are captured in Figure 10.

Affirming the Value and Visibility of Community-Based Public Health Practice

Recognition and legitimisation of community-based public health work

- Pride in being asked to host students
- Feeling recognised by universities
- Validation of community-sector expertise
- Positive impact on staff morale

Figure 10: Healthy Living Centre staff themes after EL visits by student pharmacists

The project will continue in 26-27 with trainee pharmacists within their foundation training year programme in community pharmacy. This will support learners to understand and apply the neighbourhood model of health and wellbeing early in their careers, strengthening their role in delivering person-centred care within local communities.



Figure 11: Student pharmacists and NICPLD staff visiting a Healthy Living Centre in Derry/Londonderry

4.2 Foundation Training Year (FTY)

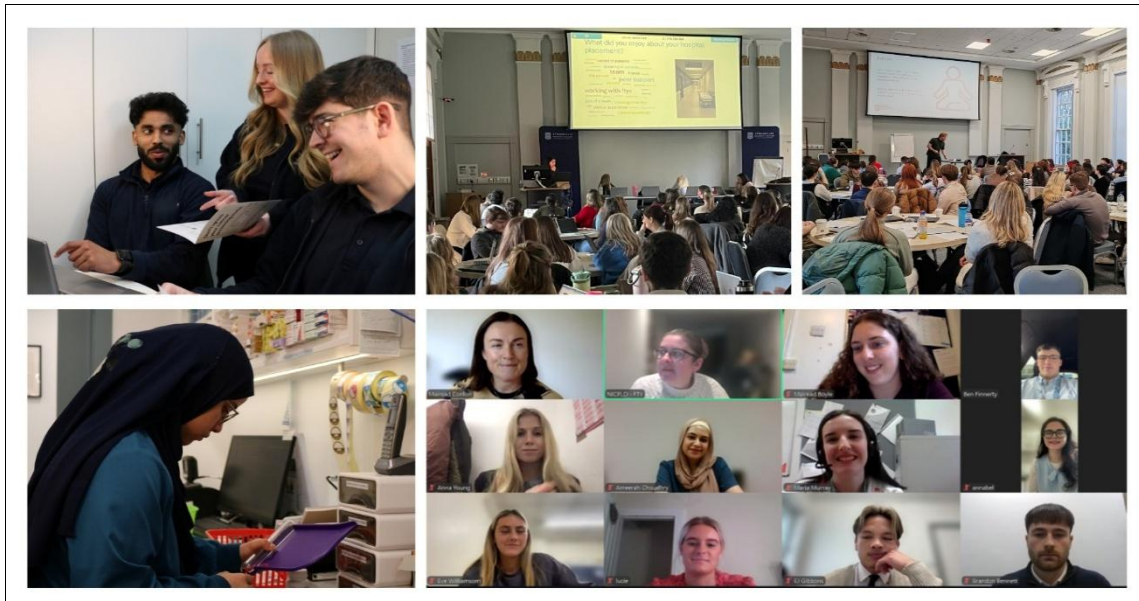


Figure 12: Photographs from FTY 2025-2026

The majority of trainee pharmacists from the 2024-2025 cohort successfully completed their FTY, with 90% (UK pass rate 77%) passing the registration assessment on their first attempt in June 2025.

The number of trainee pharmacists increased again with 182 trainee pharmacists joining the 2025-2026 NICPLD FTY programme. This is the first cohort of trainee pharmacists who graduated against the 2021 standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists and who after registering as pharmacists are eligible to apply for annotation as independent prescriber. A small number of trainee pharmacists remain on the previous non-prescribing pathways.

FTY 2025-2026 saw the introduction of a new model for the FTY in NI with trainee pharmacists spending six months in hospital pharmacy practice and six months in community pharmacy practice. In each sector, the trainee has an Educational Supervisor (ES) and in the hospital sector all trainee pharmacists also have a designated prescribing practitioner (DPP).

All supervisors completed new accreditation training which was delivered to 333 ES and 134 DPPs through a programme of on-site visits by the NICPLD team to each hospital Trust, supplemented by webinars.

The key components of the FTY are outlined in Figure 13.

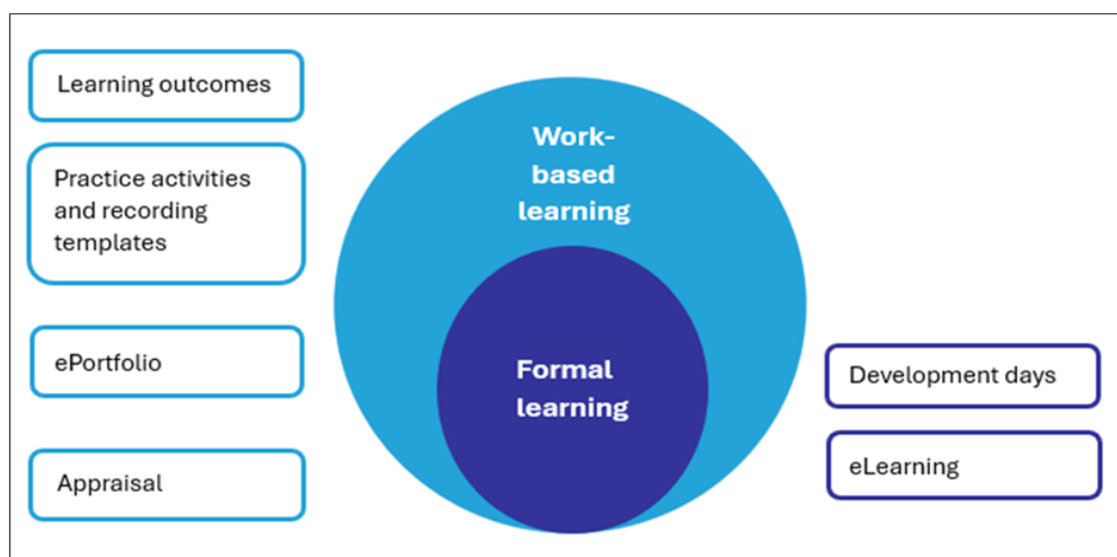


Figure 13: Key components of the NICPLD 2025-2026 FTY programme

Trainee pharmacists attended an in-person induction workshop and received ongoing support throughout the FTY from NICPLD, alongside their ES and Designated DPP. Fourteen NICPLD development days were delivered and each trainee also received four structured support and progress calls from NICPLD to provide guidance during the year.

A new event has been introduced to the FTY calendar to support trainees transitioning to practice as newly qualified prescribing pharmacists, with the first delivery scheduled for July 2026. All development days are evaluated, with trainee pharmacists reporting consistently high levels of satisfaction.

To assure the new model of FTY in NI, formal evaluation took place at six months in the FTY 2025/2026. The [report](#) shows strong support structures with a high degree of trainee pharmacist satisfaction with the opportunities presented within their FTY. Further evaluation will take place in summer 2026.

A new FTY Stakeholder Committee was convened in this Commission period. Terms of reference were agreed and the committee will form an important part of the ongoing governance of FTY in NI.

4.2.1 Regulatory Accreditation of the NICPLD FTY

NICPLD acts as the pharmacy statutory education body in Northern Ireland and in accordance with the 2021 [standards](#) for the initial education and training of pharmacists, is responsible for the quality management of the FTY and must be accredited by the GPhC. The roles of relevant organisations within the FTY are outlined in Figure 14.

Organisation or group	Responsibility	Achieved by	Activity
GPhC	Quality assurance	Setting and quality assuring the standards	Setting standards and quality assuring the management of education
Statutory education bodies and their partners	Quality management	Overseeing the delivery of the foundation year	Designing, managing and monitoring the foundation year
Employers, designated supervisors and dedicated prescribing partners	Quality control	Day-to-day delivery of the foundation year	Supervising, mentoring and proving feedback to trainees

Figure 14: Roles of organisations involved in FTY

NICPLD successfully achieved FTY accreditation for six years in January 2025. There are two conditions attached to this accreditation which are:

1. NICPLD must set out the recruitment process used for community and hospital placements for the 2026/27 training year onwards which will ensure a fair and equitable process and allow applicants to demonstrate their ability and suitability to be a trainee pharmacist. The plan must describe appropriate mechanisms for assessing each trainee's performance to justify selection decisions and the allocation of training places. This must be accompanied by a detailed project plan with relevant timelines

providing assurance that the new recruitment process will be developed and implemented for 2026/27 training year. Updates on key milestones must be provided to the GPhC for assurance that work is developing as planned.

2. NICPLD must clearly set out how trainee EDI data will be collected, analysed and incorporated into programme review processes for the 2025/26 training year onwards. This must additionally include analysis of applicants' EDI data for the 2026/27 training year onwards.

During this Commission, NICPLD submitted bi-monthly updates to the GPhC outlining progress against the two conditions.

4.2.2 Selection into FTY 2026/27

During this Commission, a regional application and selection process was developed through a Task and Finish Group. The process, managed by NICPLD to meet regulatory requirements, represents a substantial change for both pharmacy students and training providers.

Training provider engagement was strong across community and hospital sectors, with 434 community pharmacy placements and 200 HSC Trust placements published via the newly developed NICPLD Training Provider Information Portal (TPIP) for FTY 2026/27.

A total of 288 eligible applications were received, with 279 candidates progressing to a virtual Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) assessment in September 2025. The MMI consisted of seven stations and was evaluated positively by candidates, assessors and NICPLD staff, demonstrating fairness, reliability and minimal technical disruption.

Following psychometric analysis, the top-ranked applicants were allocated FTY placements through structured preferencing using InPlace®.

Delivery of this process required coordinated input across NICPLD and represents a significant operational commitment with associated resource and risk considerations.

4.3 Post-registration Foundation Programme (PRFP)



Figure 15: Photographs from PRPF 2025-2026

The PRFP is available to all patient-focused pharmacists in Northern Ireland and aligns with the Royal College of Pharmacy (RCPharm) [Post-registration Foundation Pharmacist Curriculum](#)

The PRFP is divided into two parts:

- Part 1 (FP1): Safe and effective patient care
- Part 2 (FP2): Proficient patient care

There are two intakes into FP1 each year. In March 2025, 23 pharmacists commenced the FP1 programme and with another 40 beginning in September 2025. This is a work-based programme supported by a series of workshops and webinars and requires learners to complete a portfolio of evidence that is submitted for assessment. The learner is supported by an ES in the workplace. As well as two intakes, assessment periods were increased to 4 opportunities each year. A total of 44 pharmacists submitted in March 2025 with a first attempt pass rate of 95%. A total of 20 pharmacists submitted for assessment in October 2025 with a first attempt pass rate of 100%. And a further 23 submitted in December with a first time pass rate of 100%. There were also 20 Summary of professional experiences submitted and assessed by the team.

There are two intakes into FP2 each year. In January 2025 38 pharmacists commenced the FP2 programme and with another 37 beginning in September 2025. A further 48 pharmacists commenced in January 2026. This is also a work-based programme supported by a series of workshops and webinars and requires learners complete a portfolio of evidence that is submitted for assessment. As well as two intakes, there are two assessment periods each year. A total of 27 pharmacists submitted for assessment in January 2025, with a 100% first-time pass rate. A further 24 submitted in May 2025, achieving a 93% first time pass rate. Finally, a total of 29 pharmacists submitted for assessment in January 2026 with a first time pass rate of 97%. The learner is supported by an ES in the workplace.

Due to development of the Enhanced Practice Pharmacist programme (see section 3.4), NICPLD's FP1 is now closed and the final intake for FP2 will be in September 2026.

4.4 Enhanced Practice Pharmacist Programme

Following the implementation of the 2021 [standards](#) for the initial education and training of pharmacists, the Royal College of Pharmacy (RCPharm) is leading a UK-wide review of the current PRPF curriculum with a new enhanced curriculum expected in the summer of 2026.

NICPLD contributes actively to this work through representation on Curriculum Steering group, Task and Finish group and Implementation groups.

In parallel, NICPLD hosted a roundtable event for local stakeholders in November 2025 focusing on future post-registration training pathways for pharmacists. The event was well-attended, and a summary [report](#) was published.

A key outcome was the establishment of an NICPLD-led Task and Finish Group to support the development of a new Enhanced Practice Pharmacist Programme. This programme will support newly qualified prescribing pharmacists in Northern Ireland and will be launched in autumn 2026 with the first cohort commencing in January 2027.

4.5 Advanced Practice Development (APD)



Figure 16: Photographs from APD 2025-2026

NICPLD continues to offer the MSc in Advanced Pharmacy Practice in collaboration with Queen's University, Belfast and Ulster University. Launched in September 2023, it aligns with the RCPHarm Core Advanced Pharmacist Curriculum and is open to all patient-focussed pharmacists working in Northern Ireland who have completed the NICPLD Post-registration Foundation Programme (or equivalent) and a GPhC-accredited IP course, and who are actively prescribing. NICPLD runs the Advanced Practice Development (APD) module delivering the clinical practice, leadership and management and education pillars totalling 20 credits. The other modules covering the research component (40 credits) are delivered by the universities.

In September 2025, 22 students entered year 1 of the programme with 43 progressing into year 2 of the programme.

In November 2025, The Department of Health published A Guide to Developing the Role of Advanced Practice Pharmacists in NI, a [report](#) setting out the formal adoption of a new credentialing pathway for advanced practice pharmacists in NI aligned with the Royal College of Pharmacy Core Advanced Curriculum. As a result the MSc in Advanced Pharmacy Practice will be phased out and a new supported credentialling pathway introduced in 2028. We look forward to developing this work with key stakeholders across the pharmacy profession and beyond.

4.6 Independent Prescribing (IP)

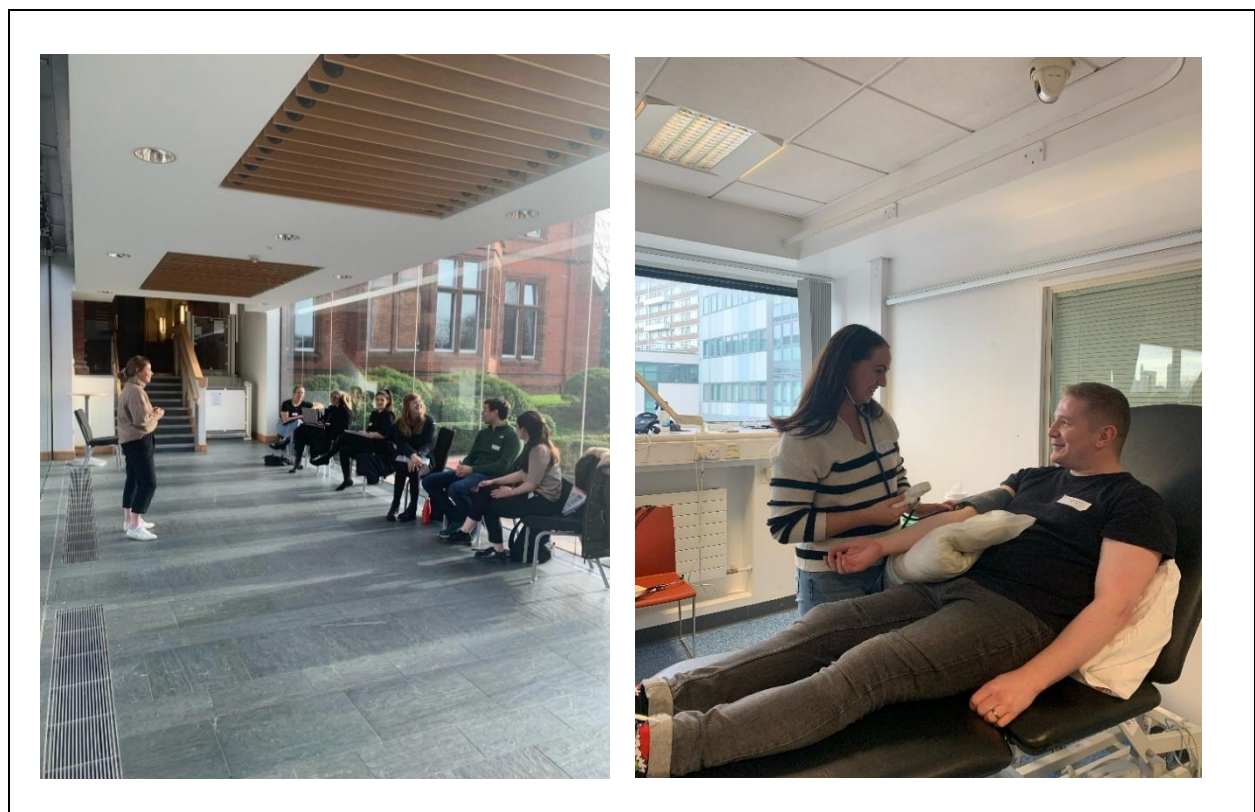


Figure 17: Photographs from cohort 19

The PG Certificate Independent Prescribing (PMYPC-IN) is a 60-credit programme leading to a Practice Certificate in Independent Prescribing as well as a Post Graduate Certificate.

In total 117 students began in August 2024 with 105 completing the course in June 2025. A further 11 from this cohort are expected complete in June 2026. A total of 110

students began the programme in August 2025 with 15 others deferring until August 2026.

In March 2024, NICPLD launched a Department of Health-funded initiative to support community pharmacists in securing a Designated Prescribing Practitioner (DPP). The initiative provides a £1,500 payment to each DPP, enabling community pharmacists to commence the Independent Prescribing (IP) programme in August 2025.

Further funding is supporting a second cohort of community pharmacists to commence the programme in August 2026. A full evaluation of the initiative will be undertaken in 2026.

The IP programme continues to receive positive feedback from students with some recent examples shown below.

- Thanks for all your help. You all have been excellent for my disability as I am very reluctant to disclose at times and you have made me feel comfortable and treated me like a normal person throughout, which sometimes people do not! - **Cohort 18 student**
- I just wanted to email to say thank you for all your help and guidance last month while I was going through a difficult time. You put my mind at ease in terms of the getting IP completed and you were very considerate and understanding of the entire situation. – **Cohort 18 student**
- Just wanted to drop you a quick email to say thank you very much to you and all the team at NICPLD for all your help throughout the year it is a credit to you all how well ran it all is. I really enjoyed doing my prescribing. Thanks again. - **Cohort 18 student**
- Lovely to receive the final email to finish things off! Thanks to you and to all the IP staff, who have been so supportive & patient all year to help us all get there. And I doubt I would even have attempted to apply to the course, let alone complete it if it hadn't been for your encouragement & advice at the very beginning - for that I am very grateful. - **Cohort 18 student**
- Just wanted to say thanks for your help and support when I couldn't cope with the stress. – **Cohort 19 student**

During this Commission period, the External Examiner for this programme noted that she “was impressed by the programme and thanked the staff for a clear explanation of the programme and timely access to all sample material”.

5.0 Continuing professional development – open access

5.1 Open learning

A wide range of eLearning material was available to pharmacists during 2025-2026 and was promoted via NICPLD eNews and a structured social media campaign linked with national health promotion events where possible. The full range of eLearning and recorded webinars is available on the NICPLD website.

New courses published during this Commission period are shown in Figure 18. Courses are updated as required and the date updated is shown clearly on the NICPLD website.



Figure 18: New courses published during the 2025-2026 Commission

Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, a total of 12,581 eLearning courses were completed by pharmacists, trainee pharmacists and pharmacy technicians equating to

42,569 hours of learning. During the Commission period, 2,547 learners engaged with NICPLD courses (live and open learning).

Course evaluations are reviewed on a weekly basis and the post-course evaluations continue to demonstrate high quality. A summary of the eLearning course evaluations for the Commission period is shown in Table 2.

A summary of post-course evaluations shows that all the audit standards were met, except for the overall satisfaction. Reasons for this are unclear but the score is consistent with the previous Commission periods.

Element	Criteria	Standard (%)	Actual (%)
Objectives	Both mostly or completely	95	96
Relevance	Both mostly or completely	85	92
Quality of content	Very good or good	90	93
Quality of presentation	Very good or good	90	92
Intellectual Stimulus	Both straight forward/challenging	95	95
Overall satisfaction	7 or more (Likert scale 0-9)	90	81

Table 2: eLearning course evaluations

5.2 Live programme

During the Commission period, a learning needs analysis survey was sent to all pharmacy professionals registered with NICPLD.

In total, 244 responses were received to the survey (201 pharmacists, 37 pharmacy technicians and 6 trainee pharmacists). An overview of the sector(s) respondents work in is shown in Figure 19.

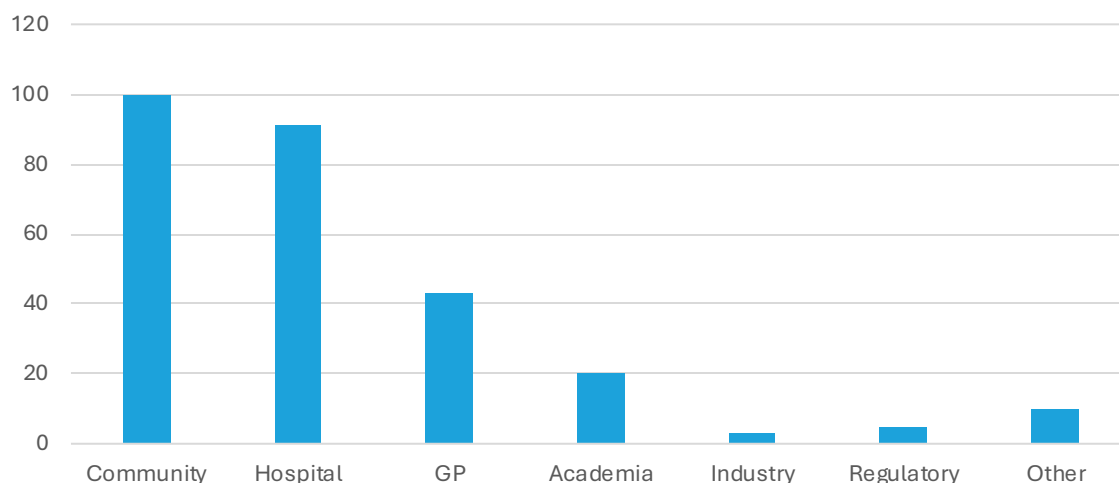


Figure 19: Numbers of respondents working in each sector

Respondents were asked to identify which areas are most important for NICPLD to include in the live education programme for 2026/27 and the results are shown in Figure 20. The most important therapeutic areas to include are shown in Figure 21.

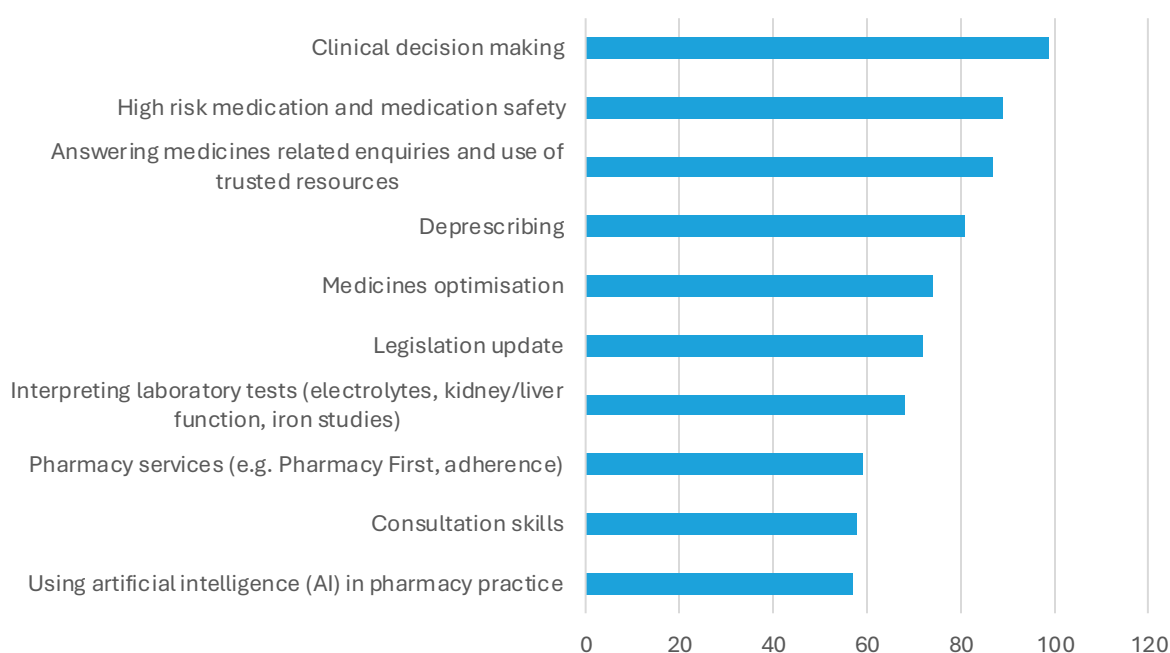


Figure 20: The top 10 (out of 19 options) topics most important to include in the live education programme 2026/27

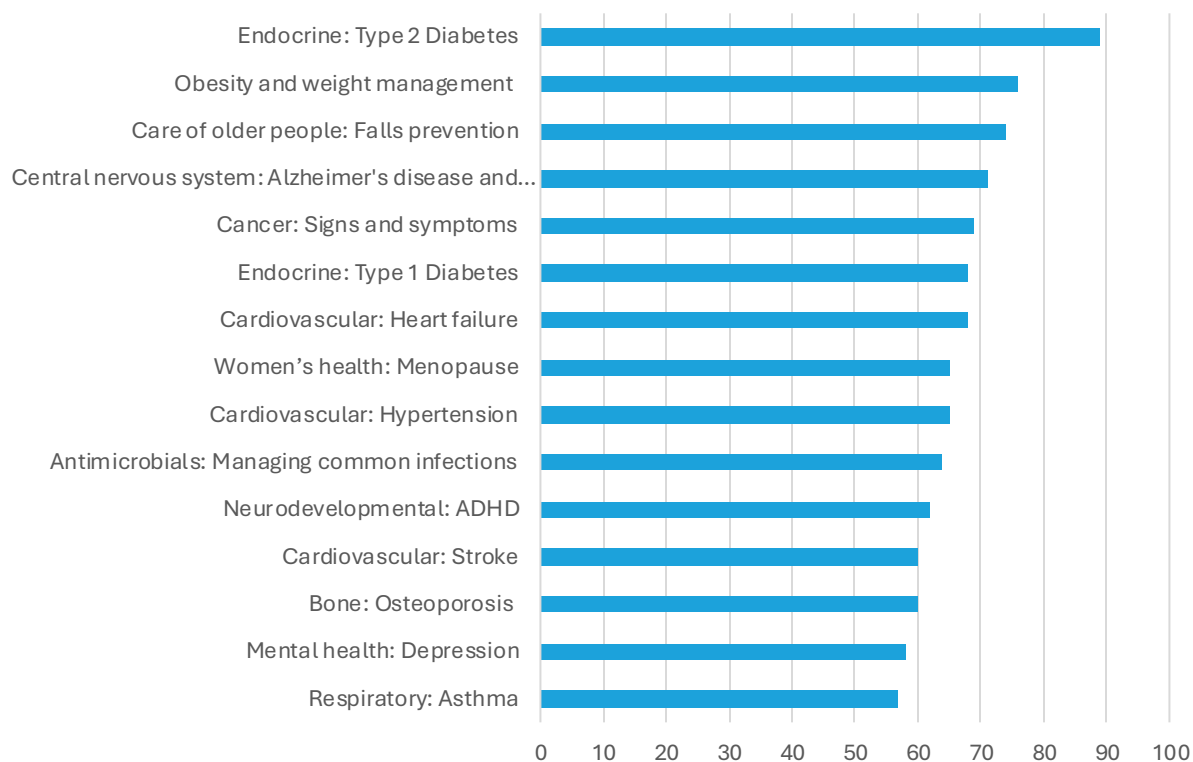


Figure 21: The top 10 (out of 72 therapeutic options) topics most important to include in the live education programme 2026/27

Respondents were asked which learning formats they preferred to use to support their continuing professional development and the results are shown in Figure 22. This showed that attending webinars, eLearning, watching recorded webinars/lecture and are the three most popular formats.



Figure 22: Preferred learning formats

Respondents were asked if there are any barriers to their participation in the NICPLD live programme and responses are shown in Figure 23. The most prevalent barriers are work and time commitments.

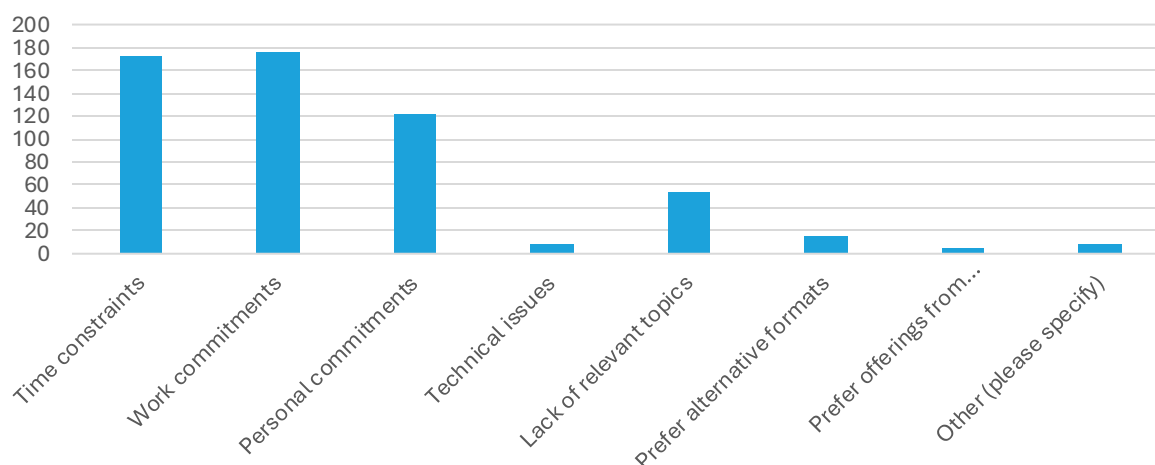


Figure 23: Barriers to participation in the NICPLD live programme

Between September 2025 and March 2026, webinars were delivered on a wide range of topics.

Table 3: Webinars delivered between September 2025 and March 2026

Topic	Number registered	Number attended	Audience
Yellow Card Reporting	56	43	Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians
Carers Awareness and Support	27	18	Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians
What You Need to Know: Childhood Vaccination Schedule Changes	79	54	Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians
Medicines management in older patients: Osteoporosis	139	110	Pharmacists
Medicines management in older patients: Dementia	111	94	Pharmacists
Insulin Delivery Devices	97	78	Pharmacists
Evaluating the evidence - A journal club for everyone: Part 1	27	20	Pharmacists
Evaluating the evidence - A journal club for everyone: Part 2	14	9	Pharmacists
Evaluating the evidence - A journal club for everyone: Part 3	18	12	Pharmacists
Interpreting Clinical Laboratory Tests	43	31	Pharmacists
Advanced Clinical Practice: Heart Failure	343	261	Pharmacists, doctors, nurses, AHP prescribers
Acute Kidney Injury	92	74	Pharmacists
Management of pneumonia	38	27	Pharmacists
An introduction to using generative artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in pharmacy practice	79	58	Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians

Assessment and prevention of cardiovascular disease	49	37	Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians
Management of anxiety	115	87	Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians
Overview of menopause management	174	149	Pharmacists
Case based discussion: HRT prescribing	173	142	Pharmacists
Management of obesity	111	92	Pharmacists
Medicines optimisation in the older person living with frailty	86	68	Pharmacists
Introduction of the new Controlled Drug (CD) reporting system	131	96	Pharmacists, doctors, nurses
Medication Review: 7-steps to appropriate polypharmacy	332	235	Pharmacists, doctors, nurses, AHP prescribers

Between September 2025 and March 2026, 4 in-person events were hosted.

Table 4: In-person workshops delivered between September 2025 and March 2026

Topic	Venue	Number registered	Number attended	Audience
Legislation and practice update	Belfast	85	69	Pharmacists
	Coleraine	44	38	
	Armagh	61	50	
Introduction to clinical skills and decision making	Belfast	28	27	Pharmacists

Post-course evaluations were undertaken for all the live learning workshops and webinars with the results shown in Table 5. A summary of responses for live learning

show that all standards were achieved. In all categories, the actual standard achieved exceeded the target standard.

Table 5: Webinar and workshop evaluations (1,212 evaluations)

Element	Criteria	Standard (%)	Actual (%)
Objectives	Both mostly or completely	95	98
Relevance	Both mostly or completely	85	92
Quality of content	Very good or good	90	99
Quality of presentation	Very good or good	90	98
Intellectual Stimulus	Both straight forward / challenging	95	98
Overall satisfaction	7 or more (Likert scale 0-9)	90	95

Positive learner feedback included:

- *Medicines optimisation in the older person living with frailty*: Really relevant to working with older patients in the hospital, speaker was excellent and so engaging. Best webinar I have attended.
- *Overview of menopause management*: Really informative course, excellent content and lots of questions from delegates of scenarios we deal with frequently - was great to get answers from consultant
- *An introduction to using generative artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in pharmacy practice*: Informative, insightful, practical, and grounded in professional practice possibilities: learning, identifying learning needs, patient counselling and, of course, expert tuition.
- *Carers Awareness and Support*: The input from the carers-very impactful and excellent advice about the role pharmacist can and do play in supporting carers
- *Legislation and practice update*: Discussion of real examples of issues we are facing with regard to private prescriptions. Particularly liked the fact it was a

workshop and not a webinar as was good to discuss with other pharmacists what they were experiencing in their practice

6.0 Other specific funding arrangements

6.1 MSc in Pharmaceutical Technology and Quality Assurance (PTQA)

In 2025-2026, two additional students were provided with funding for this three-year course offered by the University of Manchester alongside the four students entering year two and three. In total, £37,900 was paid to the University of Manchester in 2025-2026.

6.2 General Practice Pharmacists

Funding of £100,000 was available for the training of general practice pharmacists. This is used to support course fees for the MSc in Advanced Pharmacy Practice and other continuing professional development identified by the sector.

6.3 Chief Pharmaceutical Officer's (CPO's) Pharmacy Leaders Development Programme

NICPLD managed a selection process that enabled for the first time, two pharmacists from NI to join the CPO's Pharmacy Leaders Development Programme developed and delivered by the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE). These pharmacists have joined other pharmacy leaders from England, Wales and the Channel Islands.

7.0 Pharmacy Technician provision

NICPLD offered post-qualification training for pharmacy technicians in the form of Accredited Pharmacy Checking Technician (ACPT), Pre and In-process checking programme (PIP) and Medicines Management Accredited Programmes (MMAP). Once a

pharmacy technician has successfully completed one of these programmes, they must undergo reaccreditation every two years.

Additionally, pharmacy technicians could access workshops/webinars shown in Table 6.

Programme	Number of learners
MMAP Foundation	Number of successful completions 3 (7 new applicants)
MMAP	Module 1 – 26 reaccreditations +3 new = 29 Module 2 – 20 reaccreditations +4 new =24 Module 3 – 14 reaccreditations +2 new = 16
PIPC	12 reaccreditation +3 new = 15
ACPT	108 reaccreditations +22 new = 130

Table 6: Programme activity during this Commission period

The accredited course linked webinars are consistently well received. They are all reviewed annually to ensure content is current, and updated as appropriate.

Feedback from 2025 ACPT Induction webinar included: *“I really enjoyed how interactive the course was and felt like because I was having to think and also look/discuss other answers it made me come away from the course having learnt more and the possible scenarios that may arise and how best to handle them”*

Feedback from 2025 Medicines Management Skills for Hospital Pharmacy Technicians Induction webinar included: *“I liked how interactive it was, getting to talk through*

scenarios and answer questions relevant to role helps keep it interesting. Also seeing other technicians' answers and how they would deal with scenarios to learn how to improve and grow in my role."

During this Commission period, MMAP module 4, Patient Medication Counselling was developed. A supported pathway to complete this module is in development for launch in autumn 2026. The eLearning introduction to clinical services in Hospital (Working in a Clinical Environment) was fully updated during 2025-2026, and two further eLearning modules have been developed and will be available in the next Commission. This will ensure full flexibility when training educational supervisors for both the MMAP programme and the PIPC programme.

8.0 Quality Assurance Systems

NICPLD successfully underwent a 1-day external surveillance audit in December 2025 to assure continued compliance with the ISO 9001:2015 quality assurance standard.

NICPLD and DoH had quarterly assurance and risk meetings during this Commission.

9.0 Financial governance

	April 2025 to March 2026
DoH NICPLD Commission	Budget allocation : £3,000,000 Q1 £604,245.94 Q2 £545,686.15 Q3 £808,697.55 Q4 £1,041,370.36 Total spend: £3,000,000

Figure 24: NICPLD expenditure verified by QUB Research Finance