

Options appraisal for the online application system for the recruitment of NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacists (England & Wales)

The National Recruitment Scheme (NRS) is a centralised system for the recruitment of pharmacy graduates from all university schools of pharmacy across the country into NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacist posts in England & Wales.

The NRS is commissioned and managed by the NHS Pharmacy Education & Development Committee (NHS PEDC) for the benefit of NHS organisations across England and Wales. The NRS provides streamlined recruitment system at low cost. The benefits of economies of scale, lack of duplication of effort, etc., far outweigh the costs of the service. A Lead Pharmacist is responsible for the delivery and monitoring of the NRS. Webstar Health (Pharmalife) is commissioned to provide the online application system www.pharmacytraining.nhs.uk via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the NHS.

When the Pharmalife website was set up NHS Jobs did not exist. When NHS Jobs was created the NHS PEDC reviewed the functions offered by NHS Jobs to see if it could be used instead of Pharmalife. Unfortunately NHS Jobs did not meet the requirements for the recruitment of NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacists in England & Wales. Therefore the decision was made to continue to use Pharmalife for this group of trainees. It should be noted that Pharmalife is not the only system outside NHS Jobs used to recruit into NHS training positions. Other trainees recruited by mechanisms other than NHS Jobs include:

- Medical students recruited for the foundation programme do not apply through NHS Jobs; applications are made using the foundation programme website <http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/pages/home>
- Graduates from other professional groups e.g. dietetics are placed in NHS hospitals for their pre-registration training by their university

In 2009 the SLA for Pharmalife was due for review and therefore the decision to use Pharmalife over NHS Jobs was revisited. An options appraisal was undertaken to determine whether to continue to use Pharmalife or to switch to NHS Jobs.

Options appraisal

Option 1 – continue to use **Pharmalife** for the recruitment of NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacists in England and Wales

Advantages	Disadvantages
Pharmalife offers a co-ordinated approach to recruitment for all hospitals in England and Wales i.e. all applications close on same date, all hospitals receive application forms on same date, interviews take place and offers are made over the same time period. This is important as it means that candidates are able to consider all their options for pre-registration training at the same time and minimises hospitals competing for the same applicants	The NRS cost a total of £125.77 per place advertised for the 2010 intake. £62.84 of this was the cost of using the Pharmalife system. The other costs related to management of the NRS.
Pharmalife operates like the University application system whereby students are only allowed to apply to 4 hospitals – some of the most popular hospitals receive over 100	Pharmalife does not currently

applications and were there to be no restriction on the number of hospitals that each student can apply to then hospitals would be overloaded with applications	collect equality monitoring data in relation to sexual orientation and religion/belief. This has been addressed and this data will be collected for the next intake of trainees recruited (2011 intake)
The Pharmalife application system targets 3rd year Pharmacy students and OSPAP students who are eligible for pre-registration training – this prevents applications from those not eligible to apply	
The Pharmalife system acts as the job advertisement and the application system. Therefore there is no need to place costly advertisements in the Pharmaceutical Journal	
The Pharmalife system enables recruitment into joint placements e.g. hospital and community split posts	
Vacancies on Pharmalife are displayed between March and August each year. This enables the student to complete the application process in stages e.g. registration, submit academic referee details, CV etc.. It also enables students to thoroughly research the training places and make an informed decision	
The Pharmalife system displays information on each hospital and it is easy for the students to search the site for information to help them decide where to apply	
The CV and profile section of the Pharmalife application form are tailored to pre-registration applications, the form prompts the students to include information on work experience, voluntary work and university placements. The profile questions are designed to facilitate short-listing by asking for information on organisational skills, team working and professionalism	
Pharmalife enables the collection of academic references prior to short-listing – this is important to ensure that the applicant is expected to complete their degree on time	
The Pharmalife system enables students to track their application status online and automatically emails those applicants rejected at the short-listing stage	
The Pharmalife system enables regional recruitment schemes whereby the short-listing and interviews take place on a regional basis. This regional approach is very effective as it reduces duplication of effort and multiple interviewing	
Pharmalife operates a clearing house – to match candidates unsuccessful in 1st round with vacancies	
Pharmalife operates a mailing list for students who are unsuccessful after the clearing round. These students are then notified if any vacancies become available at a later date. This facilitates communication between students and hospitals with remaining vacancies and ensures students are kept informed of vacancies available	
Pharmalife can be used to advertise and recruit pharmacy undergraduates into vacation placements – this service would not be available if the Pharmalife system for pre-registration trainee pharmacists was not in existence	
The Pharmalife website is used as an information site as well as an application site – the website contains information on hospital pharmacy pre-registration training, immigration, interview technique and FAQs for both employers and students	
Pharmalife collects equality monitoring data on a hospital, regional and national basis which enables valuable workforce information	

Option 2 – Switch to **NHS Jobs** for the recruitment of NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacists in England and Wales

Advantages	Disadvantages
NHS Jobs is free of charge	NHS Jobs is unable to support a co-ordinated approach to recruitment . The likely impact of a lack of co-ordinated approach (each trust doing its own recruitment) would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confusion for the undergraduates – they would not know where to look for advertisements for pre-registration training placements or when to look for these advertisements • Undergraduates would not be able to compare what is offered in a range of training placements in order to decide where to apply • an increase in the number of offers accepted and then reneged on
NHS Jobs collects equality monitoring data in relation to sexual orientation and religion/belief	NHS jobs does not support a system where applicants are restricted to 4 hospitals – some of the most popular hospitals receive over 100 applications and were there to be no restriction on the number of hospitals that each student can apply to then hospitals would be overloaded with applications
	Using NHS Jobs would open the flood gates from who are not eligible for pre-registration training. Experience of using NHS Jobs for recruitment of other NHS posts demonstrates that a large proportion of applicants do not have the essential qualifications listed in the person specification e.g. non pharmacists applying for pharmacist jobs
	NHS Jobs main function is as an application system and most employers need to advertise the vacancy e.g. in the Pharmaceutical Journal which incurs a cost of approx £1500 for a ¼ page black and white advertisement
	NHS Jobs does not support the recruitment into joint placements e.g. hospital and community split posts
	Vacancies on NHS Jobs are usually only advertised for 2 weeks – this would give students limited time to research a range of training sites and to decide where to apply.
	NHS Jobs does not have a user friendly mechanism for the students to find information on each hospital – the student would have to search each individual advert if NHS Jobs was to be used
	The NHS Jobs application form is a standard form and is not tailored specifically to pre-registration training applications.
	NHS Jobs does not enables the collection of academic references prior to short-listing
	NHS Jobs does not enable students to track their application status online and does not inform those who are rejected at the short-listing stage. This creates an increased workload for the employer
	NHS Jobs is unable to support regional recruitment schemes
	NHS Jobs does not offer a clearing round system – therefore there would be no co-ordinated mechanism to match candidates unsuccessful in 1st round with vacancies
	NHS Jobs does not operate a mailing list for students who are unsuccessful after the clearing round. Therefore it would be difficult for students to find out about vacancies
	NHS Jobs is unable to support the recruitment of vacation students
	NHS Jobs does not have the facility for use as an information website
	NHS Jobs does not collect equality monitoring data on a regional or national basis

Conclusions

NHS Jobs is unable to support a co-ordinated approach to recruitment of NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacists in England and Wales. The alternative of each NHS organisation recruiting its own trainees is not acceptable because, in addition to being extremely costly and time-consuming, this would lead to duplication of effort, multiple interviewing, and no centralised, clear, streamlined system able to direct the process. It would also lead to a lack of equity/equality across the country. Therefore Pharmalife should continue be used for the recruitment of NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacists in England and Wales. The SLA with Pharmalife has therefore been extended to cover the recruitment of the 2011/12 intake (recruitment taking place in 2010) and the 2012/13 intake (recruitment taking place in 2011) of trainees.

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