



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health



Pharmacy Workforce Working Group 2025 Summary Report

April 2026

Introduction

The [Emerging Risks to Pharmacy Workforce project](#) examined the key challenges to sustaining a professional pharmacy workforce across both community and hospital settings in Ireland. Its findings were consolidated in the [Workforce Intelligence Report](#), which set out a series of recommendations and actions to support a sustainable future pharmacy workforce.

The first recommendation of the report was the establishment of a multi-agency group to lead national strategic workforce planning for pharmacy. In response, the **Pharmacy Workforce Working Group** was convened in April 2024. Its first annual review, published in March 2025, provides a detailed account of progress made against the recommendations and actions arising from the PSI Workforce Intelligence Report during the previous year.

The Working Group is jointly overseen by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and the Department of Health (DoH) and includes representation from:

- The Schools of Pharmacy / APPEL
- Irish Institute of Pharmacy (IIOP)
- Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU)
- Hospital Pharmacists Association Ireland (HPAI)
- Irish Medicines Verification Organisation (IMVO)
- Pharmacists in Industry Education & Regulatory (PIER)
- Health Service Executive (HSE)
 - Pharmacy Workforce Development Division
 - Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS)
- Community Governance Pharmacist & PSI Council Member
- Early-Career Community Pharmacist

2025 Highlights

The Pharmacy Workforce Working Group met quarterly throughout 2025. The group's focus remained on progressing the agreed actions aimed at ensuring a sustainable workforce, now and into the future, to meet the needs of the sector and wider health system in Ireland. Key actions supported and delivered by the working group in 2025 included:

- Publication of the Department of Health's Strategic Workforce Planning Report and PSI's 2024 Survey of the Register Report. These help support ongoing understanding and trend analysis of workforce demographics and patterns.
- The annual pharmacy workforce survey, including sentiment-based questions to better understand the pharmacy workforce in its current state.
- Implementation of the revised career structure for hospital pharmacy including the introduction of Advance Specialist Pharmacist Grade.
- Report of the Pharmacy Employee and Employer forum which discussed matters including rest periods/lunch breaks, employee benefits, administrative burden, delegation, etc.

- Development of a proposed delineated operating model for pharmacy and drafting safe staffing guidelines.

The working group also discussed changes and updates in pharmacy practice and policy, which influence, inform and evolve demands for, and availability of pharmacists in the health service.

The group will continue to meet quarterly in 2026.

We are pleased to present this report, summarising the progress made on all recommended actions during the working group's inaugural year.

Recommendation 1: Strategic Workforce Planning

A national strategy for pharmacy workforce planning in Ireland should be designed to align with national and international best practice, taking a multi-agency, data driven approach as part of an integrated healthcare system.

Action	Owner	Update
1.1 Establish a multi-agency group focused on national strategic workforce planning for pharmacy.	PSI & DOH	The Pharmacy Workforce Working Group had its first meeting in April 2024 and has met every quarter since then. The group is committed to meeting quarterly in 2026.
1.1.1 Develop a strategic workforce plan for pharmacy that is integrated with national workforce planning initiatives, using a suitable framework that incorporates available data, receives input from all relevant stakeholders and is time bound with an agreed built in review schedule.	DOH	Ireland's Future Health and Social Care Workforce report was launched in December 2025. It sets out how the Department of Health is taking a comprehensive approach to long-term health and social care workforce planning, including pharmacy workforce planning, based on 5 pillars: Plan, Build, Optimise Performance, Recruit and Retain and Invest. Work is on-going to improve data collection for the purposes of determining future demand and supply (see also 1.2).
1.1.2 Calculate the number of pharmacists required to meet the current and future needs of the pharmacy sector and health system using an appropriate workforce planning projection model.	PSI & DOH	The PSI and DOH are actively committed to ensuring a sustainable future pharmacy workforce. We continue to work collaboratively to support workforce planning initiatives prioritising key internal projects and workstreams to enhance the depth and quality of data available about the pharmacy workforce to support future planning.

Action	Owner	Update
<p>1.2 Collect data required to support workforce planning and modelling, including student related data, and pharmacist workforce data at the point of first-time registration and continued registration.</p>	<p>PSI</p>	<p>The Schools of Pharmacy collect data from their students as part of annual surveys. Please see the 2025 Student and Register Data Summary for an overview of the wider student pipeline, drawing on CAO, UCAS, and APPEL data.</p> <p>PSI currently collect data from pharmacists seeking to voluntarily cancel from the register, and in relation to information about a pharmacist’s area of practice. This information is collected on a voluntary basis. Initial scoping was undertaken in 2024 to understand proposed legislative amendments which would enable the PSI to mandate the provision of relevant workforce information from applicants/registrants. This work was paused due to resourcing constraints in 2025, but reviewing the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (Registration) Rules 2008 is a PSI priority for 2026. (See also 1.1.2)</p>
<p>1.2.1 Produce a national annual pharmacy workforce report, including in flows and out flows of pharmacists from the register, pharmacist sentiment, and other relevant workforce information to inform nationally led strategic workforce planning initiatives.</p>	<p>PSI</p>	<p>PSI issued its annual workforce survey to registrants in Q3 2025. The survey captured core demographic information, details on areas of practice, and insights into working patterns across the profession. It also included a sentiments-based section, gathering registrants’ views on current and anticipated developments within pharmacy practice, as well as broader workforce experiences.</p> <p>The survey generated valuable insights into ways of working within community pharmacy practice, along with wider attitudes, expectations, and emerging workforce pressures. Findings from the 2025 Pharmacy Workforce Survey Analysis Report will provide a further evidence base to inform ongoing strategic workforce-planning work by the DOH (See also 1.1.1 and 1.1.2)</p>

Action	Owner	Update
1.2.2 Seek to implement legislation to make completion of an annual workforce survey mandatory for all pharmacists at the point of continued registration that is underpinned by an agreed minimum dataset.	PSI	PSI has been considering the changes that would be required to enable this legislation. Work in this area was paused in 2025 due to resourcing constraints but is a PSI priority for 2026. (See also 1.2)

Recommendation 2: Leadership Of and For the Profession

There must be clear strategic direction for the contribution of pharmacy to the future health system, and appropriate professional leadership for pharmacists.

Action	Owner	Update
2.1 Bring the appointment of a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer forward for consideration within the Department of Health to provide strategic leadership, evidence based analysis and expert advice to the Department of Health, Government, broader health system, and regulatory and professional bodies, helping to shape policy and optimise the contribution of the pharmacy sector around the needs of the health service.	DOH	Work is on-going in this area under the remit of the DoH. Recruitment of a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer will be advanced in 2026.
2.2 Commission a feasibility study tasked with proposing a suitable and viable approach to addressing the need for professional leadership for pharmacy.	PSI	A medium-term timeline is assigned to this action. Initial research was carried out in 2024. A commitment to delivering on the recommendations of the Workforce Intelligence Report has been included in the PSI Corporate Strategy for 2025-2028 . Work is expected to begin on this project in 2027.

Action	Owner	Update
<p>2.3 Develop a national strategy and implementation plan for the pharmacy sector that clearly articulates a vision and role for pharmacy within the future integrated healthcare system.</p>	DOH & HSE	<p>The Department of Health continues to progress work on implementing the recommendations of the final report of the Expert Taskforce to Support the Expansion of the Role of Pharmacy. The enablers to support the delivery of the Common Condition Service were implemented at the end of 2025. This service enables pharmacists to prescribe under protocol for the first time to treat 8 Common Conditions.</p>
<p>2.3.1 Advance initiatives and policies for pharmacists to expand their current scope of clinical practice based on the evidence base for need within the health system and capacity within the sector.</p>	DOH & HSE	<p>In October 2025 legislation was signed to allow for pharmacists to provide advice and offer expanded treatment options to patients for eight common conditions. HSE clinical protocols, mandatory training, and PSI Guidelines were all developed with the first cohorts of pharmacists able to undertake their training at the end of 2025. The Common Conditions Service was formally launched on 19 January 2026.</p> <p>The Continuation of Contraception Service is in its final stages of development which will enable contraceptive prescribing by pharmacists to continue a prescription for short-acting reversible contraception (beyond 12 months). The proposed service is planned to be introduced in 2026.</p>
<p>2.4 Develop a national strategy for the future role of pharmacy technicians within the health system, examining topics such as scope of practice, the need for regulation of the role, standardisation of the qualification and workforce planning.</p>	DOH	<p>The Department of Health hopes to commence initial research on the role of pharmacy technicians in the health system in 2026.</p>

Recommendation 3: Innovation and Technology

The development and integration of process innovations and digital solutions should be expedited to benefit patients, pharmacists, and the wider health system.

Action	Owner	Update
<p>3.1 Ensure pharmacy stakeholders are involved at the design and development stages of national eHealth infrastructure projects, including ePrescribing and the National Shared Care Record, to ensure maximum benefits for patients and the health system are realised when these systems are implemented.</p>	<p>DOH & HSE</p>	<p>The multi-stakeholder Pharmacy eHealth Group, established by the Department of Health, meets every two months to discuss and provide feedback to national projects and digital health initiatives of relevance and importance to pharmacy.</p> <p>In addition to the multi-stakeholder Pharmacy eHealth Group (PEHG) established by the Department of Health, engagement on national eHealth infrastructure relevant to pharmacy also takes place through a number of other forums and working relationships.</p> <p>The IPU Pharmacy System Vendor Forum brings together pharmacy system vendors, the IPU, the Department of Health, the HSE (including national digital programmes), and the PSI to discuss developments in pharmacy IT systems, interoperability, and upcoming national digital health initiatives affecting community pharmacy. Discussions regularly cover areas such as medicines data standards, integration with national infrastructure (including the Individual Health Identifier and National Shared Care Record), and the technical implementation of new pharmacy services.</p> <p>In addition, the IPU maintains regular engagement with a number of HSE teams involved in national digital infrastructure relevant to pharmacy, including the NePS teams, the HSE National Medication Product Catalogue (NMPC) team, the National Shared Care Record (NSCR) team, and the Individual Health Identifier (IHI) programme. While not all of these are formal groups, they represent important ongoing engagements supporting the integration of community pharmacy into national digital health infrastructure.</p>

Action	Owner	Update
<p>3.2 Develop and implement solutions, including digital solutions, aimed at reducing the administrative burden associated with the national drugs reimbursement schemes operated by the HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS).</p>	HSE	<p>The Pharmacy Administrative Burden Working Group (PABWG) was established to identify and document key processes within community pharmacy that may benefit from simplification or refinement. As part of the group, an update to the procedure for submitting supporting documentation with end of month claims, known informally as the “yellow bags” process was introduced. As of 31 March 2025, pharmacies now receive advance notification when additional paperwork is required for a claim, significantly reducing the need to routinely print and submit Unified Claim Forms and associated documentation. The insights from the Working Group helped shape the overall structure of the new Community Pharmacy Contractor Agreement 2025, that incorporates areas of reform to reduce administrative workload for pharmacists.</p>
<p>3.3 Develop and implement solutions, including digital solutions, aimed at reducing the regulatory burden associated with manual, paper-based processes.</p>	PSI	<p>The Electronic Record Keeping Implementation Group was established by the DOH to progress initiatives aimed at reducing paper-based processes within pharmacy. Work in this area will continue throughout 2026.</p>
<p>3.3.1 Implement legislation required to facilitate digital solutions that reduce regulatory burden associated with manual, paper-based processes.</p>	DOH	<p>The Department of Health established a multiagency group to progress legislative change to reduce administrative burden in pharmacy practice at the end of 2025. It is anticipated that legislative change will be introduced in 2026.</p>

Action	Owner	Update
<p>3.4 Identify and highlight to members and other stakeholders, integrated technology and digital solutions, both currently available and emerging, that can reduce the administrative burden associated with dispensing and operational tasks within pharmacy.</p>	<p>IPU & HPAI</p>	<p>There is no formal strategy for implementing and promoting use of digital automation in hospital pharmacy. The sector is made up of private, voluntary and statutory hospitals with varying access to funding for initiatives. Most automation is centred around use of dispensing robots in main dispensaries and use of automated dispensing cabinets on hospital wards. The use of compounding robots in aseptic units is emerging. Many of the initiatives are limited by old infrastructure, access to funding and interoperability with existing software often resulting in duplication of workload.</p> <p>The IPU continues to highlight integrated technology and digital solutions that can reduce administrative burden and operational workload in community pharmacy through ongoing engagement with pharmacy system vendors and national stakeholders.</p> <p>This includes the IPU Pharmacy System Vendor Forum, which brings together vendors, the Department of Health, the HSE (including PCRS and national digital programmes), and the PSI to discuss system developments, interoperability, medicines data standards, and the implementation of national digital infrastructure such as the Individual Health Identifier.</p> <p>In parallel, the PCRS Pharmacy Connectivity Workstream, a joint engagement between the IPU and HSE PCRS, focuses on improving connectivity between pharmacy systems and PCRS infrastructure. Current areas of work include improving eligibility verification processes for reimbursement schemes, improving the exchange of data between pharmacy systems and PCRS, and identifying opportunities to streamline scheme-related administrative processes for pharmacies.</p>

Recommendation 4: Attracting and Recruiting Pharmacists

Access to the pharmacy profession and proportion of those selecting patient-facing roles should be monitored to ensure sufficient numbers are available to meet the needs of the sector.

Action	Owner	Update
<p>4.1 Ensure the number of pharmacy students being trained in Ireland is sufficient to meet the needs of the sector, informed by national strategic workforce planning and modelling.</p>	<p>Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science & DOH</p>	<p>MPharm programmes at the Atlantic Technological University (ATU), South East Technological University (SETU), and the University of Galway were accredited in 2025. ATU and University of Galway each welcomed their inaugural cohort of students in the autumn — SETU will follow in autumn 2026.</p> <p>See also 1.2</p>
<p>4.1.1 Ensure the number and range of experiential learning placements available aligns with the number of pharmacy students being trained, and reflects current and emerging practice needs.</p>	<p>APPEL & Schools of Pharmacy</p>	<p>APPEL and the Schools of Pharmacy have been actively recruiting new experiential learning placements. With two new Schools (Galway and Sligo) enrolling first-year pharmacy students in September 2025, and Waterford scheduled to take on students in September 2026, each of the new Schools has been running regional meetings inviting potential placement providers to identify new placements opportunities.</p> <p>Overall, APPEL is confident that the projected interest in placements appears sufficient to meet current needs for the 2026/2027 academic year. However, an increase in the number of hospital placements is required to meet HSE's workforce requirements and a business case is being progressed.</p>

Action	Owner	Update
<p>4.2 Monitor and report on student sentiment to identify risks to attrition from the workforce through a dedicated annual survey.</p>	<p>APPEL</p>	<p>APPEL continues to conduct an annual survey of fourth-year students. The report is presented at the workforce meeting and shared with the PSI. Student sentiment trends in 2025 were consistent with those observed in previous years with no additional risks identified.</p> <p>Please see the 2025 Student and Register Data Summary for an overview of the wider student pipeline, drawing on CAO, UCAS, and APPEL data.</p>
<p>4.2.1 Implement actions to address concerns of pharmacy students as appropriate to increase their retention within the profession.</p>	<p>APPEL & Schools of Pharmacy</p>	<p>APPEL and the Schools continue to promote the full range of career opportunities across all pharmacy sectors and facilitate career fairs in support of this objective.</p>
<p>4.3 Streamline the Third Country Qualification Recognition (TCQR) process for pharmacists who wish to practice in Ireland and who received their qualification from a country outside the EEA.</p>	<p>PSI</p>	<p>The revised Third Country Qualification Recognition (TCQR) route has been operational since April 2025. Work remains ongoing to support the increase in application figures for this route including the procurement of an exam which may be required for some applicants as part of the holistic application process.</p>

Recommendation 5: Career Sustainability and Progression

Patient-facing pharmacy roles must be sustainable and appropriately supported, with diverse career development and progression opportunities.

Action	Owner	Update
5.1 Publish guidance that clearly sets out the distinct responsibilities associated with each governance role within Retail Pharmacy Businesses.	PSI	This guidance was published in May 2024 and was communicated to pharmacists through PSI newsletters and website updates.
5.2 Provide access to dedicated leadership and governance training resources which can support pharmacists' career pathways.	IIOIP	Access to training resources provided through www.iioip.ie . Phase 3 of IIOIP/LIFT Leadership Programme delivered & Final Pilot Evaluation Report submitted to the Workforce Working Group. Online training programme included in IIOIP Work Plan 2026 to prepare pharmacists for taking on governance roles and to develop the leadership skills and behaviours required for such roles.
5.3 Create a national framework to allow for recognition of specialist and advanced practice for pharmacists that supports the needs of the health system and aligns with a future national strategy for pharmacy.	HSE & DOH	The initial phase of the introduction of Advanced Specialist Pharmacist posts in acute hospitals has been implemented for existing staff with a structured application process to validate advanced competencies. The process for future applicants is being finalised.

Action	Owner	Update
<p>5.4 Further develop specialised and advance practice in line with the national strategy for pharmacy and provide for a system of recognition of qualifications obtained outside of Ireland</p>	<p>DOH</p>	<p>The Minister accepted the recommendations of the Expert Taskforce to Support the Expansion of the Role of Pharmacy, which recommended that pharmacists should be able to prescribe for a range of common conditions. They have recommended an initial list of eight conditions which can be extended over time as the service evolves. All key enablers to support the delivery of this service were implemented in 2025.</p> <p>The Taskforce has also recommended the development, over the coming years, of more widespread models of pharmacist prescribing across the health service. Work on the implementation of the expansion of the scope of pharmacist practice, following on from the recommendations of the Expert Taskforce is on-going.</p>

Recommendation 6: Working Conditions

Working conditions for those in patient-facing roles must ensure that pharmacists are enabled to deliver safe, consistent, high-quality service.

Action	Owner	Update
<p>6.1 Establish a dedicated forum for pharmacist employers and employees with a time-bound scope and terms of reference, with a view to proposing and communicating best practice in relation to working conditions that must be addressed to ensure a sustainable community pharmacist workforce into the future. The focus of the forum will be on, among other matters, rest periods/lunch breaks, employee benefits, administrative burden, and appropriate delegation of non-pharmacist specific tasks.</p>	IPU	<p>The Employee and Employer Pharmacist Forum (EEF) was established in 2024 to provide a collaborative environment for both employee and employer pharmacists to explore sector-wide challenges and co-create operational and cultural solutions. Its time-bound remit focused on developing best practice recommendations to support a resilient and sustainable pharmacist workforce.</p> <p>The recommendations of the EEF have been presented to the Employee Pharmacist Committee and Executive Committee of the IPU. The newly appointed incoming Committees will now consider how best to progress with these recommendations.</p>
<p>6.1.1 Publish guidance on expectations of pharmacy owners, superintendent pharmacists and supervising pharmacists in ensuring safe staffing levels, adequate staffing mix and appropriate rest periods in community pharmacy.</p>	PSI	<p>Draft guidance was presented to the PSI Council in December 2025 and approved for public consultation which was issued in January 2026. Guidance is expected to be published in 2026.</p>
<p>6.2 Expand and promote the range of workplace health and wellbeing resources and professional supports available to pharmacists experiencing burn out and stress</p>	IOP	<p>Access to training resources provided through www.iop.ie. Emotional Intelligence study commenced with RCSI Centre for Positive Health Sciences – with report due in April 2026. IOP Mentoring Programme delivered.</p>

Conclusion

2025 was a monumental year for pharmacy – the PSI and the Department of Health wish to acknowledge and commend the Working Group members and wider stakeholders for their continued commitment and collaboration in progressing the recommended actions from the [Workforce Intelligence Report](#) throughout 2025. Many of these actions are not single, standalone deliverables; rather, they represent complex, multi-layered programmes of work that require sustained engagement and coordination across the Irish healthcare system, Government, the pharmacy profession, and the public.

It is important to recognise and celebrate areas of meaningful progress, while also acknowledging the interdependent and continuously evolving nature of workforce planning. Delivering long-term solutions requires flexibility, adaptability, and a shared understanding of the challenges inherent in addressing national-level workforce issues within a dynamic healthcare environment. While significant progress has been made in pharmacy in recent months, the working group remains committed to advancing our efforts to support a sustainable workforce.

Planned focus areas/work for 2026

2025 was a monumental year for pharmacy and the Pharmacy Workforce Working Group will continue to oversee and work to progress key actions and recommendations for the workforce including:

- Continue to develop and implement solutions, including digital solutions, aimed at reducing the administrative burden under Community Drug Schemes as part of the Community Pharmacy Contractor Agreement 2025.
- Appointment of a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer (CPO)
- Expand the scope of practice by progressing legislation to allow for contraception prescribing
- Support workforce modelling efforts through the review of PSI Registration Rules to determine and strengthen the mandatory minimum dataset collected at the point of first-time registration, continued registration, and voluntary cancellation.