General Pharmaceutical Council

Buttercups Training Ltd support staff courses reaccreditation event report, July 2024

Contents

Event summary and conclusions	
Provider	Buttercups Training Ltd
Course	Support staff courses
Names of courses/qualification	Support Staff Course for Dispensing Assistants
	Support Staff Course for Medicines Counter Assistants
	Support Staff Course for Pharmacy Healthcare Assistants
	Support Staff Course for Pharmacy Delivery Drivers
	Support Staff Course for Pharmacy Assistants in Manufacturing
	Support Staff Course for Dispensary Stock Management
	Support Staff Course for Pharmacy Support Workers
	Accuracy Checking Dispensing Assistant Course
	Pharmacy Services Assistant Apprenticeship
Event type	Reaccreditation
Event date	9 July 2024
Approval period	November 2024 – November 2027
Relevant requirements	Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020
Framework used	National Occupational Standards
Outcome	Approval
	The accreditation team has agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the Support Staff course(s) (including apprenticeship pathway) provided by Buttercups Training Ltd should be reaccredited for a further period of three years.
Conditions	There were no conditions.
Standing conditions	A link to the standing conditions can be **found here**.
Recommendations	No recommendations were made.

Minor amendments	1. Please clarify the appeal process for apprentices appealing against a decision by a Buttercups tutor (criterion 4e).
	2. The outcomes listed at Stage 4 of the Learner Code of Conduct should better refer to 'withdrawal', rather than the 'threat of withdrawal' (criterion 4e).
Registrar decision	The Registrar is satisfied that Buttercups Training Ltd has met the requirement of continued approval in accordance with Part 5 article 42 paragraph 4(a)(b) of the Pharmacy Order 2010, in line with the Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020.
	The Registrar confirms that Buttercups Training Ltd is approved to continue to offer the support staff course(s) (including apprenticeship pathway), for a period of 3 years.
Key contact (provider)	Nick Marler, Head of Client Services and Products
Provider representatives	Jane Archer, Internal Quality Assurer and Support Assessor for Level 2 courses and Accuracy Checking course
	Vicky Johnson, Internal Quality Assurer for the Pharmacy Services Assistant Apprenticeship
	Kathy Leung, Programme Development Specialist
	Nick Marler, Head of Client Services and Products
	Manjit Nahal, Head of Centre
	Monisha Naik, Programme Development Lead
Accreditation/Recognition team	Professor Ruth Edwards* (Team leader), Professor and Head of School of Pharmacy, University of Wolverhampton
	Sheetal Jogia (team member - pharmacy technician), London Pharmacy Aseptics Workforce Transformation Project Lead, Royal Marsden Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
	Liz Harlaar (team member - lay), Independent Business Consultant
	*also attended the pre-event meeting on 21 June 2024
GPhC representative	Rakesh Bhundia, Quality Assurance Officer (Education), General Pharmaceutical Council
Rapporteur	Richard Calver (Rapporteur) Freelance education consultant
Observers	Justine Carame (recently registered pharmacy technician – observer in training)
	Irene Coburn (pharmacy technician – observer in training)

	Clarissa De Souza (pharmacy technician – observer in training)
	Catherine Roberts (recently registered pharmacy technician – observer in training)

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in Great Britain. The approval process is based on the Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020.

The powers and obligations of the GPhC in relation to the accreditation of pharmacy education are legislated in the Pharmacy Order 2010. For more information, visit the **website**.

Documentation

Prior to the event, the provider submitted documentation to the GPhC in line with the agreed timescales. The documentation was reviewed by the accreditation team ('the team') and it was deemed to be satisfactory to provide a basis for discussion.

Pre-event

In advance of the main event, a pre-event meeting took place by videoconference on 21 June 2024. The purpose of the pre-event meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the provider to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

The event

The event began with a private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representatives on 8 July 2024. The remainder of the event took place on 9 July 2024 and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff involved in the design of the courses.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

Day 0 – 8 July 2024

14:00 – 16:00   **Private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representative**
Discuss provision and agree final questions and allocation

Day 1 – 9 July 2024

09:00 – 09:10   **Private meeting of the accreditation team**

09:10 – 12:00   **Meeting with course provider representatives**

12:15 – 13:15   **Learning outcomes testing session**

14:15 – 15:00   **Meeting with internal quality assurance of the course**

15:00 – 16:45   **Private meeting of the accreditation team**

16:45 – 17:00   **Deliver outcome to provider**

Key findings - Part 1 - Outcomes for all support staff

During the event the accreditation team reviewed the provision against all 19 outcomes required for all pharmacy support staff roles. To gain additional assurance, the accreditation team also explored a sample of **7** learning outcomes during a separate meeting with the provider and was satisfied that **all 19 learning outcomes continue to be met** to the level required by the GPhC requirements.

Key findings - Part 2 - Standards for the initial education and training

Criteria 1: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Criteria met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all three criteria relating to equality, diversity and inclusion continue to be met.

The provider's written submission described how the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are embedded in the courses' design and management. An EDI lead chairs an EDI committee which meets every three months and which aims to ensure courses are accessible to all learners. This committee examines learners' attainment data and the provider explained that learners' age, sex and ethnicity did not appear to impact attainment. The provider does not collect data on other characteristics, such as religion and sexual orientation, believing that this is disproportionate, but does consider data on local socio-economic published by the government in case this impacts learners. All staff receive either face-to-face or online EDI training which includes the use of inclusive language used when designing learning activities and writing workbooks.

The provider also explained that learning materials foster learners' engagement with EDI. Staff have diversified the range of case studies in response to the EDI committee's recommendations, and 'hotspots' embedded in online activities point learners towards relevant information, highlighting that people of particular faiths might wear certain items of jewellery, for example. Staff confirmed that learners engage with these hotspots. Workplace training supervisors (WTSs) must also confirm that learners have proven capable of treating all patients with respect. The provider also considers learners' individual needs when making reasonable adjustments to learning and assessment arrangements, which include extensions to assessments and are governed by clear policies. Students with dyslexia, for example, can access coloured overlays. Staff have also considered visiting schools to encourage new entrants to pharmacy, especially in areas where there is low university enrolment.

Criteria 2: Course curriculum

Criteria met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all six criteria relating to course curriculum continue to be met.

The provider's written submission explained how the courses related to each other and to the work of pharmacy support staff. All learners complete two core modules whose learning outcomes are relevant to all support staff, but then study technical modules whose content is specific to learners' own roles. Learners who move between roles or take on additional roles can be exempted from repeating the core modules, but can study the specific technical skills for their new roles. The Pharmacy Services Assistant Apprenticeship course delivers teaching, learning and formative assessment over a period of twelve months and includes an e-portfolio whose completion gives apprentices the confidence to take the end point assessment. The support staff courses are mapped to the National Occupational Standards framework at level 2, and the apprenticeship course is mapped to the relevant apprenticeship standard, also at level 2.

The course staff explained that the apprenticeship course had recently been redesigned following stakeholder feedback. and the provider hopes that the course will prove more attractive to employers and learners. The course has been more efficiently designed by combining some assessments, reducing their overall number. Staff reassured the team that the course continues to meet GPhC standards because all content and assessments were mapped onto the earlier course.

Each WTS ensures that learners' apply their learning to their work. WTSs are usually pharmacists, but may be other registered healthcare professionals, including general practitioners in dispensing practice. WTSs receive training at the start of the course and can access important resources throughout the course via a portal which also allows them to upload assessments they have signed off.

Course content is delivered by blended learning using various teaching techniques to suit learners. Learners have the opportunity to test and apply their knowledge in practice through formative assessments before completing the summative assessments. The team noted that flipped learning is only available for apprenticeship learners and asked the course staff to clarify why it was not used for other learners. Staff explained that virtual classes are needed for apprenticeships to support the end point assessment, so flipped classes are possible for this course. Virtual classrooms are not needed for other courses.

Criteria 3: Assessment

Criteria met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to assessment continue to be met.

The provider uses a range of formative and summative assessments, underpinned by formal strategies. Formative, scenario-based questions help learners understand the context of pharmacy practice, including principles such as person-centred care, professionalism and patient safety.

The application of taught knowledge is achieved through various assessed workplace activities, including workplace observations endorsed by the WTS, Virtual Pharmacy scenarios, and activities in an activity book. Learners are taught essential knowledge before being tested on these subjects through formative assessments and development opportunities. They undergo summative assessments only after they have received developmental feedback following formative assessments.

Staff also hold professional discussions with apprenticeship learners after they have completed each domain of the apprenticeship. This helps to build learners' confidence in preparation of the end point assessment. The summative assessment for the apprenticeship is an end point assessment which meets standards set by the Institute for Apprenticeships; assessments for the other courses are mapped to the GPhC's learning outcomes for support staff.

Assessments are marked promptly: many are marked online but staff aim to mark other assessments within ten days, and assured the team that staffing was sufficient to meet this guarantee. The provider holds a waiting list of tutors who can be recruited to mark work, for example.

Marking is checked using a quality assurance process by which internal quality assurers (IQAs) review learners' work, and staff are confident that their quality assurance processes are robust and efficient. They had, for example, found that a WTS had submitted identical testimonies regarding four different

learners, and had alerted the WTS to this anomaly, prompting the WTS to submit correct testimonies. Staff had also been informed by an employer that learners had copied from each other: staff advised the employer on possible actions and the need to keep clear records of the case.

Criteria 4: Management, resources and capacity

Criteria met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all eight criteria relating to management, resources and capacity continue to be met. One criterion requires two minor amendments.

The provider's written submission clearly described the courses' management structure. This includes a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Department which is managed by the Head of Centre and comprises over 70 GPhC registrants delivering pharmacy programmes at levels 2 and level 3. A Safeguarding and Welfare Team is responsible for identifying and investigating any issues concerns learners' welfare. A Functional Skills Team consists of mathematics, science and English tutors, and a Learner Review Team supports learners throughout their course, assisting them with queries and co-ordinating their pastoral support. The Client Services Team manages relationships with the provider's clients, and other teams offer administrative and IT support. The provider has recently been acquired by a larger company (BPP Education Group) but expects BPP's educational experience to benefit these courses.

The team used the event to explore the efficiency of the above structures. Course staff were confident that the courses enjoyed buoyant enrolment and completion rates: completion rates remain strong and any decline is usually because of attrition rather than failure. Staff noted that workplace pressures may impact learners, but added that they are able to support learners experiencing difficulties. Learners' feedback indicated concern over the IT system, particularly with delays in receiving online test results. Staff explained that there is usually no such delay, but acknowledged that they have sometimes been caused by IT outages. The provider lacks an in-house test zone system, but this is being planned and the provider's recent acquisition will help this.

The team was satisfied by the provider's systems for ensuring that employers are able to support their learners. The provider seeks information about workplace locations at the onboarding stage, for example, and the Client Services Team is available to offer information to employers. This can then be relayed to WTSs and learners. Resourcing is ensured by employer and learner agreements by which employers confirm that they understand the nature of the course and will support their learner. These guarantees are monitored throughout the course, and the providers can offer support to employers if any shortcomings in the workplace learning experience emerge. The provider also have a plan to monitor staffing. The course staff has grown in recent years and the provider is in strong position to plan for any increase in enrolment. The provider also has six IQAs: this is sufficient to support other courses because individual IQAs can support multiple courses even if they specialise in one course or level.

The team discussed the provider's arrangements for academic malpractice. The learner handbook provides guidance on malpractice, and learners must adhere to a code of conduct. The provider can arrange for staff to visit the learner if any concerns are raised about their behaviour. The team noted that the provider's documentation referred only to appeals against a WTS's marking and asked the provider how a learner on the apprenticeship course would appeal against an assessment decision

made by Buttercups staff. The course staff clarified that appeals by apprenticeship learners would be referred to an IQA for a decision: the team was assured of this process but requires the provider to make a minor amendment to the relevant documentation to clarify the appeal process for apprentices appealing against a decision by a Buttercups tutor (criterion 4e).

The team also pointed out that the Learner Code of Conduct sets out three potential outcomes at stage 4 of the provider's disciplinary process, one of which is the 'threat of withdrawal'. The course staff explained that this refers to an issue that might lead to a learner being withdrawn from the course. The team and course staff agreed that this wording does not accurately describe an outcome in the context of the disciplinary process. The team therefore requires the provider to make a minor amendment to the documentation to refer to 'withdrawal' rather than 'threat of withdrawal' (criterion 4e).

The provider's process also support learners who raise concerns about their workplace. Learners can use email or buttons on b-Hive to report concerns to staff. Staff have previously investigated concerns, discussing them with WTSs and supporting learners' wellbeing.

Criteria 5: Quality management

Criteria met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to quality management continue to be met.

The provider was confident that all courses undergo appropriate quality management. The provider's Products Team includes pharmacists from different backgrounds, as well as e-learning and technical specialists. Staff keep up to date with current practice to ensure that courses remain relevant to learners and the workforce. The provider can change course contents following feedback from learners via their WTSs, and immediate changes can be made in response to concerns regarding patient safety. Learners are informed of any changes.

The provider's IQAs monitor the quality of formative assessments and feedback. A sampling matrix ensures that IQAs review all tutors across all activities over time, and the provider uses a standardisation exercise to improve the consistency of marking and quality assurance. Staff use a 'red-amber-green' rating system for individual tutors, and a teacher development programme includes teaching observations which also helps to standardise teaching methods. The provider also uses feedback from staff, learners and employers alongside assessment data to monitor the effectiveness of learning and assessment strategies.

Staff are confident that IQAs have the time and support to fulfil their roles: managers ensure that they have sufficient time to complete the quality assurance activities, for example. Staff are also confident that the quality assurance system is working efficiently. IQAs have, for example, identified occasions when WTSs have submitted testimonies with incomplete information, or when systems were not being followed in workplaces: they advised workplace staff to remedy these errors.

The team explored the provider's approach to addressing feedback from learners. Staff explained that they review the courses in response to feedback, and have liaised with colleagues to improve the quality of webinars, for example. They intend to use more interactive approaches to traditionally text-heavy topics, including calculations. The team also asked for more information on the provider's 'Me and my medicines' group. The founder of the 'Me and My Medicines' group has been consulted as an

expert patient and external advisor for some of the level 2 and 3 programmes content. Staff have found this groups to be a significant source of feedback as it allows engagement with patient groups. They also obtain patient feedback from tutors who conduct surveys in workplaces, with questions relating to learners' product knowledge and the quality of their service.

Criteria 6: Supporting learners and the learning experience

Criteria met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to supporting learners and the learning experience continue to be met.

The provider supports learners and WTSs in various ways. They are provided with handbooks at the beginning of the course: these include information on the learning materials, the b-Hive platform, and relevant policies and processes. They can also access support from the provider's dedicated learner support phone line or using the reporting buttons on b-Hive. Staff are aware that pastoral issues may sometimes be quite sensitive and the provider therefore allows staff to seek support from mental health first aiders if they encounter distressing concerns.

Staff are confident that WTSs receive appropriate information to support their supervisory duties. For example, WTSs undergo an induction course, and are instructed in assessment methods. They also receive guidance on ways of giving structured constructive feedback which is based on a template to facilitate consistency. Each WTS must complete a validation assessment before assessing learners and their marked work is checked by course staff before it enters the quality assurance sampling process. WTSs are required to specify the amount of protected development time that their learners will receive. The course staff verify that WTSs are providing this time by monitoring learners' feedback. Learners can inform the course staff of shortfalls in development time to course team: staff will then discuss such matters with WTSs as well as visiting practices to check compliance.

Key findings - Part 3 - Role-specific learning outcomes

Please see the individual courses part 3 report for commentary.