

Update on IPU Pharmacy Workforce Project



Last year the IPU established a Pharmacy Workforce Group with the purpose of looking at solutions that could potentially be introduced to ease the workforce pressures currently being experienced in community pharmacies. Actions taken during this year were:

- **Workforce survey:** The survey was issued to all IPU members last March 2022. The **survey report** contained a wide variety of recommendations for consideration to alleviate the workforce crisis.
- **PSI workforce stakeholder meeting:** A meeting was held with the PSI in May 2022 in which workforce initiatives were discussed. There was a discussion around the reconvening of the stakeholder group (HSE/DoH/PSI/IPU) with the purpose of exploring short and long term solutions that could be implemented. This stakeholder group will consider the proposed recommendations in the IPU **Survey Report**.
- **Recruitment campaign:** An IPU webpage '**Pharmacists from abroad**' was developed that provides **guidance** and frequently asked questions (**FAQ**) regarding the PSI registration process for EU and non-EU pharmacists applicants. We have run recruitment campaigns in both the UK and Spain. There has been an increase in the number of hits on

this webpage.

- **National Pharmacy Association:** We have met with colleagues in the National Pharmacy Association to discuss initiatives ongoing in Britain and Northern Ireland to address their pharmacist shortage issues. We are considering these initiatives and their potential impact on our workforce shortage.
- **Critical Skill List:** We actively lobbied the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) for the pharmacy profession to be included in the Critical Skill list in 2021. In June 2022, Minister of State Damien English announced the addition of pharmacists to the Critical Skills Occupation List, allowing for faster access to work permits for pharmacists wishing to work in Ireland from other jurisdictions.
- **Language competency requirements:** We have been requesting for the PSI to review the language competency requirements. In June 2022 the PSI Council approved adjustments to the minimum acceptable score for the 'Writing' component across the four recognised tests.
- **New delineation model for retail pharmacy business:** A **new model** was presented to the PSI in July 2022 by the IPU. This model explores the possibility of enabling the closing of the retail pharmacy business to facilitate breaks for pharmacists while retail trading is still available. The PSI welcomed the model and are drafting guidance for the implementation of the new registration model.
- **Third Country Qualification Route (TCQR):** The drafted new TCQR process was approved by PSI council in October 2022. The implementation of this process requires public consultation and changes in the legislation. We will collaborate with the PSI regarding the implementation of this new process.
- **MPharm college places:** We met with universities to discuss increasing pharmacy places and postgraduate entry in September 2022. A meeting has been requested with the Minister of Education to discuss an increase in places in pharmacy colleges across Ireland.
- **Political Briefing Day:** The shortage of pharmacists was raised as a key issue at the political briefing day that took place last September, at which 104 politicians attended.

While we understand that addressing the workforce crisis may appear as a slow process, we continue to strongly advocate looking for possible solutions that will alleviate this matter.