

Pharmacy Technician

Pharmacy technicians are registered professional members of the pharmacy team who prepare and manage the supply of medicines and give advice to patients and customers.

Case study: Sam Cox and Louise Dorrell

Sam Cox and Louise Dorrell are employed by Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust and work at Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Littlehey. They are part of the multi-disciplinary healthcare team which includes general practitioners, nurses, physiotherapists, dentists, opticians, mental health practitioners and dieticians.

HMP Littlehey has approximately 1,200 residents who are mostly elderly and middle-aged. About three quarters of them are on medication for a range of long-term conditions typical for people of that age.

Sam is the Senior Pharmacy Technician and Louise has been working as a pharmacy technician, having previously worked in community pharmacy

Sam had left university and was working in a shop when she saw a job advertised as trainee pharmacy technician at Peterborough Hospital. She applied for and got the job and qualified in January 2012. She worked in a community setting for a little while but decided to go back to hospital, working at Papworth Hospital for several years. She reached a point where she was ready to try something new and applied for the job at Littlehey, starting as a pharmacy technician in November 2015 and becoming the senior technician in March 2019. In this role she supervises two pharmacy technicians and the pharmacy assistant and is responsible for the smooth-running of the pharmacy.



Louise had started work as a dispenser in Boots and decided that the way to progress was to train as a pharmacy technician, qualifying in October 2018. After a few months working as a pharmacy technician there she saw the job advertised at Littlehey and went for it, starting there in April 2019.

Within the prison the pharmacy technicians:

- Run 'see to take' sessions every morning and tea-time, for residents who need to have their medication supervised. This might be because the drugs they are taking can be traded, or because they need help in managing their medication.
- Support residents who are 'in possession' of their medication, that is those who self-manage their medication. In some ways this is similar to community pharmacy, providing the medication, making sure they have enough medication until their next appointment and in Sam's case managing and ordering repeat prescriptions. It's also important to find out why people are taking particular medications as in some cases it may be more appropriate to refer them to another healthcare professional (a physiotherapist for back pain, for example) rather than simply providing medication.
- Oversee medication compliance; reconciling the drugs an individual has in their cell with the pharmacy records.
- Participate in daily multi-disciplinary team meetings to discuss patients of concern and any issues from the prison that might impact on particular residents.

Both Sam and Louise have learned about the clinical aspects of treatment, such as blood test results, levels of blood pressure, and liaising with GPs in a way that would not happen in a hospital setting. Working in prison means you have to be good at problem-solving, keeping your cool and maintaining focus with more opportunities for progress than in a hospital.

Read more about the role:

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pharmacy/roles-pharmacy/pharmacy-technician>

Read more about training to become a pharmacy technician:

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/medicines-optimisation/training-pharmacy-technicians>



The work is very varied with opportunities to get to know residents and see their treatment in a holistic way rather than just handing over medication.”