

Commercial in Confidence



## Buttercups Training Ltd



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## 1. Organisation – Information, Introduction and Overview

Buttercups Training delivers high quality training programmes to pharmacists, dispensing technicians, dispensing assistants and support staff working in hospitals, the community, dispensing doctors' practices, and in the Armed Forces. Over the course of the last three years, they have continued to secure contracts to provide training for a number of the large multiples, hospitals and independent pharmacies as well as for individuals who fund their own studies. Accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) for their delivery, they play a leading role in the development of the sector.

They provide a range of Level 2 and 3 qualifications and deliver Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships funded through Eastleigh College. Their delivery model continues primarily to be through distance learning; they also provide a range of bespoke workshops and a pre-registration development programme for graduate Pharmacists. The pharmacy roles that they provide mandatory qualifications as well as CPD for include, Medicine Counter Assistants as well as those also involved in managing dispensary stock, Dispensing Assistants and Pre-registration Trainee Pharmacy Technicians.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) is embedded within their offer and includes a 24/7 telephone Helpline; email support, initial contact and induction through a dedicated front line Professional Services team; support through the Learner Journey from markers and vocational assessors, on line support and access to information and learning resources as well as regular review telephone calls. The IAG service is aiming for potential learners get on the right course, support them to successfully complete, and understand what further learning and progression might involve as appropriate. The service is for all learners, and it is for these services that the organisation is accredited.

The business strategy for the organisation, established in January 2015, has five primary goals centred on maintaining their significant market share; developing a new LMS for all learners, clients and staff; continuing to work in the pre-registration sector; working to maintain channels of funding for the sector; and increasing profitability.

This Assessment Report details the services provided by Buttercups Training and includes a brief description of the organisation, the assessment methodology and an overview of how the organisation was able to demonstrate that it continues to meet all elements of the **matrix** Standard.

## 2. Areas of Particular Strength

A number of strengths identified during the assessment. These detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- Distance learners continue to have support. Buttercups Training have maintained effective approaches that support potential and existing learners to engage and make successful progress to complete professional qualifications; this is a fundamental fulcrum of their work. With a high proportion of learner's accessing their programmes on a part-time employed basis, the regular follow up through the learner journey and operational reporting and tracking are having a particularly positive impact. Learners and partners cited the call responsiveness, 24/7 helpline, e-mail support and throughout the assessment commented about "*always giving learners enough time*", "*professional contact and understanding*", and "*building effective relationships*". (3.4)
- The organisation has maintained a focus on utilising its resources effectively in the delivery of their service. The new approach of combining the Assessor and Marker activity provides an improved contact for learners and increasing staff capability; the investment in a new technology platform is a major commitment to developing further the learner experience; and the management approach is now more devolved and involving with the staff team. (2.1)
- Buttercups Training has maintained and further developed their strong working position with partner organisations and networks to enhance and improve their service offer. In particular, the recognition of their courses by the General Pharmaceutical Council, involvement of employers in road testing their new services such as the Visual Pharmacy, and the integrated feedback and reporting are all positive examples of their approach. Overall performance and achievements recognised by Eastleigh College, their main funder, who have awarded them Apprenticeship Provider of the Year on two occasions in the last four years. (1.8, 4.4)
- The organisation has in place a comprehensive approach to ensuring that their delivery is actioned to achieve their aims and objectives around engagement and supporting successful programme completion. The operational systems of trackers, learner journey reports, follow up calls and reviews, and the shared team knowledge and understanding are effective in developing and maintaining learning relationships over time. This is particularly successful given the high number of learners aged 16-19, the extensive length of the Apprenticeship programmes, and the nature of professional support needed by pre-registration Pharmacists. (3.2)
- Buttercups Training demonstrates considerable energy and effort to ensure that their services are impartial and objective as they continue to grow their market share of their programme delivery in the sector. The direct contact, bespoke advice for EU and international potential learners, clearly defined progression pathways and external signposting, as well as leading on the Trailblazer set up are all examples of their approach. There is a sense of them being 'guardians of the sector and ensuring that a professional approach is being taken to the provision of information, advice and guidance that they deliver. (3.3)

- The overall approach to continuous quality improvement taken by the organisation is very much at the heart of their work. There were many examples provided of improvements and pilots taking place. It was apparent through the range of manager and staff interviews that everyone is engaged and have quality improvement as a way of working in their job roles; there is a simple and practical approach being taken and is working particularly well for them. (4.8)

### 3. Areas for Continuous Improvement

A number of areas for continuous improvement identified during the assessment, which may develop or enhance the service delivered. These detailed below and for the organisation to consider as part of its ongoing continuous quality improvement actions. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments.

- The organisation may wish to take the opportunity to revisit how it presents information about the early engagement and on course IAG support currently available through their Website, application pack and induction activity. For example, this could be about revisiting the IAG Policy document and aligning the content to the four **matrix** Standard four Element. Developing and using a flow chart to explain the various steps of IAG along the learner journey, utilising case studies to illustrate the experience of others, or developing simple explanations outlining the features and benefits of the IAG service may also help. Details about the **matrix** Accreditation on the Website should be updated to reflect the current Standard.(3.1)
- As a part of the developing staff Induction Handbook and Workbook resources Buttercups may wish to consider how they might explain further the role that staff have in providing effective IAG and the associated organisational ethos. The suggestions outlined in the action above may contribute as well to this development. (2.5)
- Buttercups Training focuses on supporting learners to complete successfully their qualifications and programmes of learning. Through the learner journey look at English and maths, ERR, PTLs and a development toolkit action plan is used with pre-registration pharmacists. As part of their ongoing programme development and particularly with the introduction of the Trailblazer Apprenticeships that will have a greater focus on supporting personal development it may be helpful to consider further the individual outcomes they will need to define, e.g. attributes of an effective Pharmacy Technician or Counter Assistant. Opportunities are likely to emerge for them to review their feedback forms used to gather the impact of the individual 'distance travelled' of learners. Defining this benefit further over and above the completion of the qualification will potentially provide the organisation with the opportunity to promote the full benefits of their programmes as well as using them as additional measures of success. (1.5, 4.2)
- The organisation has a substantial programme of development and long-term ambition for their new front facing learner platform. A clearly defined strategy will provide improvements to monitoring and evaluation, tools for content delivery through a range of devices, opportunities for demonstration and piloting, greater linkage to the Website, and enable connected social activity including blogging.
- This planned step change for the organisation is noted and it will be interesting to review as development progresses to confirm to see the impact on the learner experience. (4.7)

## 4. Methodology

The following methods have gathered evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process.

- Planning discussion with Business Development Manager
- One to one interviews involving, Managing Director...three Senior Managers, five members of staff and one learner.
- Telephone interviews with nine learners and three partner representatives.
- Group discussion with two members of staff
- The opportunity to visit their offices based in Keyworth, Nottinghamshire.
- Review of various resources and information systems including the organisation's website and intranet, promotional materials, business planning resources, learner application and induction packs, tracking reports, and a range of feedback and evaluation documents.
- Feedback meeting with Managing Director

## 5. Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Buttercups Training operate with a business strategy that sets out a five-year vision from January 2015 to *be the most innovative, high quality, cost effective training provider for pharmacy*. They have identified a range of overarching business goals that has an operational strategy that outlines the learner experience to be about *providing the highest quality learning experience available to ensure learner success and their progression into further learning, with enhanced career opportunities*.

They set out to ensure that the recruitment of learners is on the right course, provide support to achieve their qualifications, and to identify next learning steps where appropriate. The embedded information, advice and guidance support these aims and they have established measurable objectives: timely success to be in excess of 70%; current performance over the last two years has been at 70%. They aim for their dropout rates to be below 10%, which they regularly achieve. Their performance is on a par with face-to-face delivery rates for comparable age groups and course length in a large college environment. Maternity leave can also be a factor in dropout rates. For pre-registration pharmacists they are achieving an adjusted successful examination pass rate of 89% compared with a national average of 74%.

Their approach to ensuring that their service is delivered effectively is robust and consists of, for example, well-defined processes, timely response to enquiries, colour coding of learners needing higher levels of support, monitoring systems, regular telephone reviews and learner journey tracking. All of this back office activity is ensuring effective delivery of the key components of the IAG service. The regular reporting, team meetings, training and development, and close management support for the delivery team is providing a high level of customer care. Learners and partner represented, reported on the high levels of care and support, provided for learners.

Their overall ambitions of the organisation centre on maintaining and developing further their reputation in the market and through review and evaluation included in management and team meetings, it is evident that they are taking a number of steps now to improve what they do. Examples of actions to improve the learner experience, involves the development of the learner platform, combining the Marker and Assessor teams, and externally accrediting their qualifications.

Individual learner outcomes are defined in a number of ways such as through the initial application contact, assessment for English and maths, through the ERR module and within the PTLS framework. Details maintained in the learner record and examples included achieving the qualification to develop in a role, upgrading English and maths and having a better picture of a possible career route in the pharmacy sector. Within the pre-registration pharmacist, training, individual development outcomes embedded within the workshops such as in speed counselling scenarios. Examples of outcomes provided by the team included building self-confidence and becoming more effective at patient interactions, completing the qualification, and gaining successful registration.

Learners have awareness of the features and benefits of the support that they can receive and how it can help them through initial contact with Buttercups, including accessing their website, during initial telephone and e-mail discussions, as a part of the application and

induction process, and within the regular review discussions. Managers and staff members have a clear understanding of the service and what it is trying to achieve, learners at interview were generally aware of the support available and particularly highlighted the benefits they had received from the induction, regular review calls and accessing the helpline.

*“Buttercups exceeded my expectations-they ring straight back and people understand.”  
(Learner)*

The individual learner outcomes are monitored and evaluated in management and team meetings, including Helpline team meetings, on tracking schedules, within the tutor review meetings, and the standardisation meetings. It is evident that this work is generating service improvement and examples provided included the introduction of more interactive workshops, development of the induction process for learners and piloting the use of Tablets. Feedback forms gather feedback identifying achievements and contributions.

## 6. Findings against the matrix Standard

### 1. Leadership and Management

*The way in which the organisation is led and managed to develop an effective service*

The Managing Director has developed the management team and the senior managers meet on a regular basis to look at the overall business strategy and operational performance. Information is cascaded through team meetings and staff members commented on how this was working effectively. The Managing Director works closely in the business and is accessible to the teams. The Chairman of the company provides staff with an opportunity to meet him to understand about the business and the Managing Director has hosted family days. The organisation aims to live by their defined set of values; these were apparent in the feedback received during the assessment interviews. Those working remotely and on a part-time basis reported how they felt connected and understood what the business was aiming to do.

The Knowledge Base carries all of the organisations policies and SOPs which include those covering Health and Safety, Data Protection, IAG and Equality and Diversity. The document library provides a control system for documents and managers have responsibility, for ensuring, that they update appropriately. They are monitoring learner success rates and have changed a number of marketing images to improve attraction of different groups. Secure systems are in place including on-line log in controls and staff have remote secure access to the back-office data systems. Learners receive information about the key policy areas as part of the induction conversations as well as highlighted in various resources. The organisation is closely aligned with its awarding, accrediting and funding bodies are able to gather updates to legislation and amend its policies accordingly; Senior Managers are members of industry networks. There is a timetable for policy review and update.

Buttercups Training provides support for employers with premises registration requirements to ensure that training placements are appropriately registered. They are ensuring that they are up to date with the Medicines Act that regulates the sale of medicines. Staff members are required to complete on-line Equality and Diversity training. The application process is structured to identify any learner additional support needs and examples were provide of support with Dyslexia; the team has a dedicated Functional Skills Tutor.

The organisation has moved away from attending conferences and exhibitions to promote their services. They have achieved greater success through relationship building directly with employers and supporting them in the promotion of their work at events such as hospital open days as well as through national training team structures. Buttercups Training act to promote potential opportunities for Apprenticeships on the National Apprenticeship Website on behalf of employers. Details of pre-registration training opportunities promoted on a separate Buttercups Training Website and their courses advertised through pharmacy schools in universities. General enquires are fielded by the team about working in the pharmacy sector. The Buttercups Training website highlights the nature of support and range of courses available in some detail.

Staff members explained how they have the opportunity to contribute to service development through brainstorming sessions, ideas@, team meetings and examples provided included working more with video conferencing to improve contact, planning the next review to reduce failed calls, and developing the Staff Handbook and Work Book to enhance the induction process for recently recruited team members. Learners reported how they are provided with feedback forms to complete and can use the review discussions as well to feedback on their service. Service improvements piloted with learners such as the use of tablets. There is a feedback link on the Website.

The organisation has established strong relationships with a number of partners and networks that are enhancing their service delivery. Working closely with the General Pharmaceutical Council has provided professional accreditation of their programmes. The relationships of the Managing Director and Senior Managers with them and other bodies is enabling them to keep abreast of, for example, Trailblazer Apprenticeship development in the sector, changes to key legislation, and supporting those in charge of trainees in their pharmacy practice such as Superintendents. Technology development, are supported through links with Keele University and membership of the Learning Technologies Association. Their relationship with Eastleigh College is assuring funding for the sector; they continue to develop the range of employers including large retail multiples, hospitals, independent pharmacies, dispensing doctors' practices and the armed forces.

*“Professional integration and demonstrate a real duty of care.” (Partner representative)*

## 2. Resources

### *The assets invested and applied in providing an effective service*

The organisation is investing in the development of a new learner platform, as described earlier, and utilises a number of systems and tools to ensure that it is planning and managing service delivery effectively, e.g. instant messaging and remote access to systems and the provision of Laptops for staff members. There are protocols in place for managing the Helpline; calls at weekends and evenings demonstrate its benefit for learners. The organisation structure has developed to merge the Marker and Assessor teams, providing a more joined up and knowledgeable team as well as being able to service demand peaks and troughs more effectively.

Information provided for learners, can be obtained, through the Buttercups website and includes a range of course information and downloadable brochures, a section and useful graphic on career pathways, details about GPhC Registration, course fees, and news including details on law updates and changes to the Drug Tariff. The team are also searching on the internet for signposting information such as up to date course and contact information at Universities. Members of staff highlighted how they would regularly utilise the GPhC website for information about education and training requirements for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians as well as standards for Pharmacy support staff, including Dispensing Assistants and Medicines Counter Assistants. Managers explained how they would research information relating to regulators in different counties to be able to advice on the appropriate qualification pathway and registration of international students in the UK. The teams are active in sharing information internally through various meetings as well as in the open office environment. Managers have key industry contact and are able to keep abreast of changes and update accordingly; they support staff on information relating to funding, qualifications and the pharmacy sector. The award and accrediting bodies provide information about changes and the GPhC conducts a regular three-year review of the organisation's training and information base. All information documents accessed through the Knowledge Base. The new updated Staff Handbook provides helpful information about the courses delivered.

*“Currency and relevance.” (Partner representative)*

Managers described how they have set out to ensure that team members have appropriate vocational qualifications and experience, such as Pharmacy Technician and Pharmacist. All assessors are required to complete a minimum Level 3 Assessor qualification. Staff members described they are supported in their development through training and development opportunities such as Functional Skills, Masters in On-Line Digital Education, as well as opportunities to be trained as a Marker. A number of staff members described their roles had developed in the organisation and were provided with the opportunity for career development.

The organisation has a structured approach to new staff induction, redeveloped their approach, with a new Handbook and Workbook. Peer support and observation provide early learning as well as opportunities to sit with other departments such as the PTS team to learn about support processes for learners. Internal and external verification takes place and supports the induction process.

### **3. Service Delivery**

*The way in which the service is delivered effectively*

The organisation ensures that it is delivering an impartial and objective service in a number of ways. They have a structured engagement and application process; dedicated Managers providing sector based career pathway IAG; research prior learning, qualifications and regulatory backgrounds; work closely with the GPhC to ensure that their work reflects appropriate standards and ethics; have in place an IAG Policy, and train staff to ensure they operate in line with the ethos of Buttercups Training.

The early engagement activities provide the opportunities for the employer, and the learner to ensure that the qualification or training is appropriate to their job role and meets their needs. Learners consistently reported how well the qualification or programme of training explained and how the recourses received reinforced this. Learners provided with options to complete their qualifications on line or using paper based submissions. Module options provided within qualifications over and above mandatory requirements. Learners can choose to buy a training programme about working in the pharmacy sector.

Support is a major feature of their service delivery and learners provided a range of positive examples including the regular review calls, Helpline on a Sunday afternoon, visits to non-registered sites such as in a prison pharmacy, access to PeTS to monitor progress, career pathways graphic on the Website, support with English and maths, and the sharing of vocational experience. Pre-registration pharmacists gain support through a range of workshops and work with, for example, the Insight tool to understand more about personal styles in the workplace. Programme tutors provide access to their e-mail and participants commented about the professional knowledge and understanding of the Buttercups team that helped them to be successful in their registration examinations as well as learning more about the world of work.

Learners and staff members provided a range of examples of signposting and the benefits gained. They included to universities to complete pharmacist qualifications, the National Careers Website for support in look at learning and work options, [pharmacistsupport.org](http://pharmacistsupport.org) for a range of support service for those on pre-registration training, the GPhC for information about routes to registration and standards of training and qualifications in the sector.

#### **4. Continuous Quality Improvement**

*The way in which the service provided is reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis*

The Managing Director and management team are involved in reviewing all feedback including end of programme feedback forms. Project evaluation and review is taking place, and feedback from employers is a part of the contract review meetings. Feedback is clearly an important factor for the organisation and ideas and for service improvement are generated such as changes to the learner induction into more bite sized chunks and using video, simplification of materials and forms, and the development of new courses. There is a complaints process in place.

Compliance audits and observations have generated development areas around improvement to questioning techniques. Pharmacist and Dispensing Managers are able to feedback through the review process and this is enabling additional support for learners or creating additional work opportunities to practice. Service level agreements are in use with some major employers and provide a foundation for performance review and input; some prefer irregular informal contact though. The GPhC works with Buttercups Training to monitor pass rates for pre-registration and have explored how parental influence may generate pressures for success of their children. The senior managers are regularly engaging in service development with partners such as the Trailblazer Apprenticeship.

There is in place a structured approach to quality assurance and the framework includes clear service standards and SOPs, utilisation of feedback systems, and service development. There is a strong drive to manage and develop their services and links to their overall strategy and the work of the Senior Management Team and Board.

Members of staff reported how they had recently completed their annual appraisals and felt supported on a one to one basis. Opportunity to reflect on performance and identify areas for development are provided in the provision of a questionnaire are aligned to their overall service aims and objectives. An example of personal development included gaining more knowledge of marking to support the operation of the Helpline.

In addition to the development of the learner platform already mentioned the organisation has seen the level of Facebook and Twitter activity grow. A video is on the Website to explain who Buttercups are and learner induction video is in the process of development. The Knowledge Base platform upgrade has resulted in improved access and flexibility. The Slack App is used to engage staff in projects and the WordPress Blog is used to update the sector on the work of Buttercups Training in addition to sharing updates and news such as Drug Tariff changes.

It was evident through the Assessment that Buttercups Training has further developed their approaches to continuous quality improvement. The examples provided in this report illustrate how they have been working.

## 7. Conclusion

Buttercups Training demonstrated in this successful **matrix** Accreditation Review that they are effective at supporting distance learners, are continually investing in their resources, operate with strong partnerships and networks, deliver a consistent performance, and are impartial and objective in their practice. Continuous quality improvement is at the heart of their organisation. They welcomed the feedback at the closing meeting and the annual **matrix** Continuous Improvement Check will allow them to demonstrate on an ongoing basis the developments they are continuing to make in order to support individuals. These may include the Areas for Continuous Improvement identified earlier in this report.

*(Please note that continued accreditation is subject to annual Continuous Improvement Checks at twelve and twenty-four months following assessment and three-yearly on-site accreditation reviews. If checks/reviews are not undertaken in a timely, way this will have an impact upon the organisation's accreditation. <http://matrixstandard.com/continuous-improvement-checks>.)*

Assessment Type	ACCREDITATION REVIEW
Assessor's Decision	STANDARD MET
Assessor's Name	ROB BARLOW
Visit Date	14/9/15-15/9/15
Client ID	C10106
Assessment Reference	PN101120

## 8. The matrix Standard Evidence Grid

Element 1 Criteria		Met	Strength	AfCI
1.1	The service has clearly defined measurable aims and objectives, which link to any wider organisational strategic aims.	✓		
1.2	The service is provided with clear leadership and direction	✓		
1.3	The organisation implements policies to promote equality and diversity, impartiality, confidentiality and professional integrity in all aspects of service delivery	✓		
1.4	The organisation complies with existing and new legislation which might impact upon the service	✓		
1.5	The organisation defines client outcomes and uses them as a measure of success for the service	✓		✓
1.6	The organisation promotes the service in ways which are accessible to all those eligible to use it	✓		
1.7	Clients and staff influence the design and development of the service	✓		
1.8	The organisation establishes effective links with other appropriate partnerships and networks to enhance the service	✓	✓	

Element 2 Criteria		Met	Strength	AfCI
2.1	The organisation uses its resources effectively to deliver the service	✓	✓	
2.2	Clients are provided with current, accurate and quality assured information which is inclusive	✓		
2.3	The organisation defines the skills, knowledge, competencies and qualifications, in line with current national recognised professional qualifications and frameworks, for individual staff roles, linked to the aims and objectives of the service	✓		
2.4	Staff are supported in undertaking continuous professional development and provided with opportunities for career progression	✓		
2.5	Effective induction processes are in place for all staff	✓		✓

<b>Element 3 Criteria</b>		<b>Met</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>AfCI</b>
<b>3.1</b>	The service is defined so that clients are clear about what they might expect	✓		✓
<b>3.2</b>	The service is delivered effectively to meet its aims and objectives	✓	✓	
<b>3.3</b>	The service provided is impartial and objective	✓	✓	
<b>3.4</b>	Clients are given appropriate options to explore and understand that they are responsible for making their own decisions	✓	✓	
<b>3.5</b>	When exploring options, clients are provided with and supported to use appropriate resources including access to technology	✓		
<b>3.6</b>	Clients benefit from signposting and referral to other appropriate agencies or organisations	✓		

<b>Element 4 - Criteria</b>		<b>Met</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>AfCI</b>
<b>4.1</b>	The organisation measures and evaluates the service against its stated aims and objectives and identifies improvements	✓		
<b>4.2</b>	The organisation monitors and evaluates client outcomes to support and improve service delivery	✓		✓
<b>4.3</b>	The organisation evaluates feedback on the service to build upon its strengths and addresses any areas for improvement	✓		
<b>4.4</b>	The organisation evaluates the effectiveness of its partnerships and networks to improve the service	✓	✓	
<b>4.5</b>	The organisation defines quality assurance approaches which are used to improve the service	✓		
<b>4.6</b>	Staff performance, linked to their role within the aims and objectives of the service, are reviewed and evaluated to improve the service	✓		
<b>4.7</b>	Effective use is made of technology to improve the service	✓		✓
<b>4.8</b>	The organisation continually reviews improvements to help inform the future aims and objectives of the service	✓	✓	