



Accelerating Safer Prescribing through Polypharmacy Training & Facilitation by Sarah Baig

Overview

As a passionate clinician and academic, I've had the privilege of playing a central role in championing safer, more personalised prescribing practices through the national Overprescribing Programme. My journey with the Health Innovation Network West Midlands (HIWM) began after participating in the National Action Learning Sets led by NHS England — an experience that profoundly inspired me to become a driver of change across our region. Recognising the power of structured learning and community-based improvement, I transitioned from participant to facilitator, supporting system-wide capability in delivering high-quality, person-centred polypharmacy reviews as part of the HIWM team.

The Scale of the Opportunity

Polypharmacy presents a complex and growing challenge within health systems, especially for people living with frailty and multimorbidity. Unwarranted variation in prescribing and the risk of harm from overmedication demand a coordinated response — one that combines education, evidence, and clinical insight. Through my facilitation role with HIN WM, I was able to bring together stakeholders across care settings and a systems-level view to support:

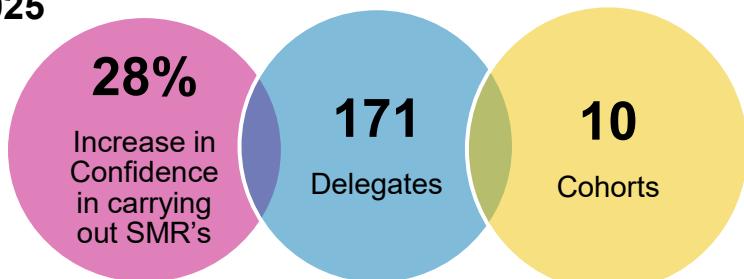
Training Design & Delivery

- Developed and localised training content that translated national priorities into practical, accessible guidance.
- Delivered interactive “Learning at Lunch” sessions for the local Integrated Care Board (ICB) — reaching frontline teams with digestible and implementable insights.
- System Engagement which was supported interdisciplinary engagement, including GPs, pharmacists, nurses, and care coordinators.
- Used national frameworks and local intelligence to tailor sessions, ensuring relevance and resonance

Community of Practice Leadership

- Actively contributed to and helped grow a **Community of Practice** for polypharmacy within the region.
- Facilitated cross-organisational learning, sharing innovation, case studies, and peer-led strategies to tackle overprescribing at scale.

HIWM Polypharmacy Local Training (virtual Polypharmacy Workshops) – Successes – 2023 - 2025



Sarah Baig

Pharmacy Professional Development and Governance Lead, Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, Assistant Professor University of Birmingham, MPharm prescribing lead.



“The learning from the programmes was further extended to undergraduate pharmacists as part of the undergraduate teaching at a local institute through embedding the polypharmacy core teaching around SMRs and shared decision making, into the pharmacy undergraduate curriculum. This aligns with changes to the initial education and training standards for pharmacists and emphasises the importance of deprescribing alongside prescribing.”

Facilitating polypharmacy education through the HIWM virtual Polypharmacy Workshops (vPW) has been one of the most rewarding and impactful aspects of my career. It brought together everything I value: evidence, improvement, and above all, better care for people. The appetite to learn and change among our clinicians was inspiring — and it's been a privilege to help unlock that potential. The support and structure provided by the Health Innovation Network were instrumental. The HIN's regional reach, collaborative ethos, and focus on spread and adoption made it the ideal platform for embedding national priorities into local systems. My work with HIWM demonstrates how clinician-led education, backed by national strategy and innovation networks, can drive real transformation on the ground”

The ripple effect of this work has been clear and measurable across several domains:

