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LPC Conference 2016: Key outcomes

On Wednesday 2nd November, LPC representatives from across England met for the 2016 annual conference, with the Government's recent decision to impose a two-year funding package on the community pharmacy sector topping the agenda for the day's discussions.

Over 160 representatives from 69 LPCs attended the national conference and the feeling amongst delegates was one of betrayal by the Department of Health's apparent disregard of the value of community pharmacy services and its dismissal of the deep concerns of patients who rely on the care provided by community pharmacy teams.

Delegates conveyed a strong message that LPCs across the country have no confidence in NHS England's ability to engage with the sector. They unanimously supported a motion stating that there is insufficient expertise within NHS England regarding community pharmacy and a lack of recognition of the work that community pharmacy sector does and the positive impact it has. This has resulted in a dangerous and damaging imposition decision.

During his address to the conference, pharmacy minister David Mowat MP spoke of his intention to move community pharmacy into a future shaped around services, many of which will be commissioned locally, but he acknowledged that some CCGs are easier to work with than others and that this can be a fundamental block to commissioning.

The minister's recognition of the barriers to community pharmacy's full integration into the wider primary care team was discussed by delegates later in the day and LPCs were clear that these barriers could be tackled by CCGs. Delegates therefore supported a proposal for PSNC to request that the minister writes to CCG leaders asking them to create development plans for community pharmacy services in their areas. LPCs will also be stepping up their efforts to work with CCGs and PSNC is enhancing its support to LPCs, to help them with this challenge.

Whilst LPCs will continue to work with commissioners to extend the range of local NHS services available from community pharmacies, delegates felt that the impact of the imposition is such that the ability of contractors to fund additional skills development will be severely compromised. LPC representatives at the conference therefore unanimously supported a motion stating that additional funding should be made available for community pharmacists to develop their skills as new local services emerge.

Discussions from this year's LPC Conference were fed into PSNC's planning for 2017 and the Committee recognises that it is important for PSNC to ensure it is meeting the needs of LPCs during this challenging time. As such, PSNC agreed to take forward the actions unanimously agreed by the conference.