

April 2016

Key campaign messages update

Introduction and background

Following the letter sent on 17th December 2015 in which the Government set out a number of proposals for the future of community pharmacy, national and local pharmacy organisations have been engaging a wide range of stakeholders seeking their support for the sector.

The campaign to date has been focused on three key themes, getting across to stakeholders the facts that:

1. Pharmacies are a valuable and valued resource
2. The Government's plans threaten patient access to pharmacies and pharmacy services
3. The implications for patient care have not been properly considered and may be damaging

To support these principles the national pharmacy organisations discussed key shared messages and PSNC published a document of suggested messages in February. These are available to download from the [PSNC website](#). These messages are still relevant as we continue to work to ensure that as many people as possible understand and support community pharmacy.

However, since the launch of the campaign a number of additional facts and documents have been published, and engagement between now and 24th May can be supplemented with these additional messages. This document sets out these most recent suggested messages.

Key overarching messages

1. The government must engage with community pharmacy

PSNC, the negotiating body for community pharmacy, has [published service development proposals](#) that would make better use of the community pharmacy network and provide better value. The Government and NHS must give these proposals proper consideration.

2. We must prevent chaos in the network

The Government's proposals have created huge uncertainty and anxiety, and could put patient care at risk. The consequences of them are unpredictable. The government and NHS have yet to explain how they will prevent high quality, valued local services from being lost if pharmacies close.

3. We all need to understand the impact

The Government and NHS must work with pharmacy to better understand the impact of their proposals. Decisions should not be made nor actions taken until it is clear what the impact will be and that it is not damaging.

The value of community pharmacy

Research commissioned in 2016 by the National Pharmacy Association (NPA) has produced a number of statistics that LPCs and others may like to use in any communications with local stakeholders. Information on the research, as well as some key results, is available on the NPA website at: www.npa.co.uk/news-and-events/news-item/government-cuts-local-pharmacies-put-pressure-gps-hospitals

The consultation and response

- NHS England and the Department of Health have still not published the evidence base for their plans or any analysis of what the impact of the proposals will be.
- The Government has not conducted an assessment of the impact of its proposals on patient safety or on the quality of care. We believe the proposals would increase pressure on GP surgeries and hospitals.
- We are pleased that the Department of Health has agreed to PSNC's request for it to extend its consultation on the proposals for community pharmacy. The initial time given for a consultation of this scope and complexity was inadequate.
- GPs have expressed concerns about the plans – the NHS Alliance has called them 'astonishing' and 'extremely short sighted'.

The funding proposals

- Community pharmacy teams are already stretched and working very hard to provide the current levels of service under the existing funding arrangements.
- We have seen no evidence to suggest that the sector could bear the proposed funding reductions without making changes to staffing, service levels or opening hours.
- We do not accept that there are too many community pharmacies. There is some clustering of pharmacies, but in a competitive market pharmacies must meet local patients' needs in order to survive.
- We would support the facilitation of voluntary mergers for any pharmacies in clusters but we must ensure that all patients' needs continue to be met rather than using blunt instruments.
- We must not use crude measures of the care provided by pharmacies. The value of the individual contact between pharmacy teams and patients must not be underestimated.
- Technology will play an important role in the future of healthcare and community pharmacy is committed to developing online services where those will benefit patients. But there is no evidence that the proposed greater uses of technology, for instance to remotely dispense medicines, will lead to cost savings.
- We would like the NHS to consider other alternatives to achieve the efficiencies needed that do not involve closures or funding cuts, but rather seek to make better use of pharmacies and the services that they can provide as part of the NHS.

The potential of community pharmacy

- PSNC has [published service development proposals](#) including the introduction of a care package that would see electronic repeat dispensing becoming a default option where medicines are needed on a long-term basis. The proposals would also introduce patient registration at pharmacies and see pharmacies offering enhanced medicines optimisation services, building on the existing Medicine Use Reviews and the New Medicine Service.
- The service proposals also set out how community pharmacy teams could offer inhaler technique checks and coaching sessions, post-discharge MURs and minor ailments advice and emergency supply services.
- It is also suggested that pharmacies could take part in six national public health campaigns every year, and that teams could record prescription interventions using a standard classification system.
- Community pharmacies are uniquely placed to help deliver efficiency savings through an expanded role that will enable them to do more to help patients. We are in need of support rather than changes that may lead to closures or reductions in services.

Many of the key messages above are included in our flyer on the value of community pharmacy. This can be [downloaded from the PSNC website](#) and could be shared with local stakeholders.

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information, please contact [Zoe Smeaton, Head of Communications and Public Affairs](#).