

July 2016

## PSNC Briefing 036/16: Organising a local MP engagement event

Parliament has now risen for summer meaning MPs are likely to have time to focus on constituency work. To keep up momentum in the campaign for community pharmacy, LPCs may like to consider hosting a local roundtable event bringing the MP together with other local stakeholders to consider how the proposals might affect local services and build support for the constructive alternatives that we have put to the Government.

This Briefing sets out guidance and tips for LPCs on how to organise such an event. If LPCs require further support or advice on an event please contact [zoe.smeaton@psnc.org.uk](mailto:zoe.smeaton@psnc.org.uk) or [campaign@psnc.org.uk](mailto:campaign@psnc.org.uk).

### Event objectives and format

We recommend that you begin by talking to the local MP, perhaps asking them to chair the event for you. You may need to be flexible on timing and format as the MPs will have preferences, but you could start by giving them some ideas.

The most important thing is to opt for a format that will enable you to demonstrate the breadth of support for community pharmacies. The aim of the event is to ensure that the MP is clearly instructed to communicate this support to ministers back at Westminster. Local Councillors should also leave with this impression and could also be encouraged to ask their Health and Wellbeing Board Chair or Cabinet Member with responsibility for health to consider writing to ministers.

The following formats could work:

**A roundtable discussion over a cold buffet lunch.** The MP chairs a discussion on how community pharmacy can do its bit to improve the health of the local population. The MP kicks off the discussion by inviting each participant to offer an example of something that pharmacy offers now, and something it could offer in the future. The MP then invites a contractor representative to outline how the Government's proposals could affect pharmacy services locally. Participants are then invited to debate a way forward. At the end, the MP tells participants how he or she will take their feedback and use it in Westminster.

**An evening reception.** A reception for a larger number of delegates, focused on speeches from the MP, a contractor representative, a patient representative and perhaps a commissioner or local healthcare provider. Attendees could be asked to sign a large (A2 sized) board (examples [here](#)), committing to the campaign for community pharmacy. Photographs could be taken of the MP and constituents signing the pledge board. Refreshments are provided and attendees are encouraged to network throughout the evening.

**An afternoon panel event.** A local journalist chairs a discussion, in which the MP, a contractor representative, a patient charity and a provider or commissioner give a short speech, before the full panel answers questions from the audience. Refreshments and networking are provided after the discussion has concluded.

You will need to make sure that all your guests know the format in advance, and know how they will be expected to contribute. For any event, participants should also be supplied with three or four bullet points summarising the issues for debate.

### A note on costs:

- LPCs will want to keep costs modest. Local councillors in particular may have reservations about accepting lavish hospitality.
- Costs could include:
  - Venue
  - Catering
  - Any printing (briefings, name badges)

### Who should attend?

- **Local Members of Parliament**
- **Local Councillors.** Think about relevant councillors who will have a role on their council e.g. Chairs of Health & Wellbeing Boards, Cabinet members for Health (unitary and county authorities), Health Scrutiny Chairs. Councillors will have an interest in how the proposals for pharmacy will affect public health services to their communities.
- **Patient and patient groups.** You may like to invite patients who can talk about how they have benefited from community pharmacy services, local patient representative groups such as HealthWatch, and contacts from local patient charities.
- **Other healthcare professionals.** This could include GPs, other healthcare providers such as care homes and members of local specialist health teams such as diabetes or asthma teams.
- **Pharmacists.** Make sure that there is at least one contractor present. Other pharmacy attendees could include LPC officers and members of the pharmacy team.

### A note on contacting MPs and councillors:

- Each MP will have a different way of managing their invites but the safest way to ensure your invitation gets through is by sending it to their parliamentary email address – during the recess, you can follow up by calling their constituency office. PSNC has drafted a template invitation to your MP, and you can find all the MPs' contact details [here](#).
- Every council's website will have a 'councillor information' page, which will have their individual contact details including email, postal address and telephone number. Check for guidance on the Council's website on how best to contact councillors.

### Tips for organising a successful event

- **Maximise attendance:** Work with your MP – ask them if they will host the event for the purposes of invitations. The LPC should draft and produce invitations, but they could read 'Joe Bloggs MP invites you to a roundtable meeting'.
- **Give as much notice as possible:** Politicians will need at least 4-6 weeks' notice of the event. They will take some time as summer holiday, so ask when would be convenient for them.
- **Pick an easily accessible venue:** Try and pick a venue which is easily accessible by public transport and has good parking.
- **Chairing the event:** The MP or a local should chair the event, but will require a detailed brief from the LPC.

- **Tailor the invitations:** Ensure that any communication about the event – particularly the invitation are tailored to the local context - the more constituency and council specific the communications, the more likely the politicians are to attend. The invitation should also come from the host of the event to make it more personalised.

## Planning for the event

- **Agenda:** think carefully about the agenda for the discussion; try keep it focused around a single topic to ensure there is a good discussion and some conclusions can be drawn. Some key messages are discussed below but LPCs may also want to think about a local angle.
- **Seating plan:** if you are hosting a roundtable event, put together a seating plan and make sure that the chair has a copy to ensure they involve everyone in the discussion and know who is expert in which areas.
- **Brief the chair:** the Chair/host of the event should ensure that everyone can be involved in the discussion and at the end should make some concluding remarks. They will need a briefing including timings for the event, information on the participants, and the structure of the discussion.
- **Taking notes:** make sure someone is there to make a note of the discussion and capture any agreed follow up actions.
- **Media coverage:** you may like to invite the press to the event, or issue a press release with quotes from participants and photographs from the day. It may be helpful to discuss this with the MP's office to see if they have any preferences about how the event is covered.

## Key messages on the day

LPCs will want to tailor conversations to their local areas and MP, but broadly the discussion will need to focus on the potential local impact of the proposals for community pharmacy and the alternatives to this. The following resources could help with planning:

- **Shared key messages:** A document containing messages that have been drafted by the pan pharmacy campaign steering group is available to download with this Briefing. The pharmacy organisations are working to distil the messages into key resources, which will be available shortly.
- **Infographic:** An infographic briefing for MPs setting out how community pharmacy could better be used to save the NHS money and do more to help patients is available on the [campaign resources page](#).
- **Counter proposals briefing:** A briefing for MPs setting out PSNC's counter proposal for community pharmacy is available on the [campaign resources page](#).

## Actions following the event

The event shouldn't be a one-off but the start of a longer term relationship and dialogue, or the continuation of an existing relationship. There are a number of things you can do to make sure this happens:

- Send a thank you email following on from the event – but use it to reiterate some of the key issues raised and highlight any actions that were agreed.
- Offer a follow up meeting to discuss any issues in more detail.

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require further support or advice on an event please contact [zoe.smeaton@psnc.org.uk](mailto:zoe.smeaton@psnc.org.uk) or [campaign@psnc.org.uk](mailto:campaign@psnc.org.uk).