

February 2016

PSNC Briefing 007/16: Campaign guidance for LPCs

Introduction

On 17th December 2015 the Government announced a number of plans for community pharmacy via an open letter to PSNC. The proposals included a £170m reduction in funding for community pharmacy in 2016/17. Since publication of the letter it has also become clear that as many as 3,000 pharmacies may close, that Establishment payments will be phased out, and that there may be a drive towards a commoditised supply service with an increased focus on warehouse dispensing and online services.

PSNC and other national pharmacy organisations believe the proposals pose significant threats to both the community pharmacy network and patient care, and we are working together to coordinate campaigning work to influence the Government and NHS. This briefing sets out a number of ways in which LPCs can contribute to that campaigning work.

LPC Actions Checklist

LPCs may wish to consider taking the following actions which this briefing document will explain in further detail:

- Plan a local engagement campaign to include MPs, councillors and others
- Keep contractors informed and involved in the campaign
- Collect and collate good case studies of patient care
- Engage with the local media
- Support the campaign including via petitions and social media

How to plan a campaign

- Understand the context and the strategy: we are now recruiting supporters for what will be a long fight; months rather than weeks. See PSNC's '[key campaign messages' briefing document](#) for more detail.
- Choose your targets using the [template LPC stakeholder map](#). Think about how best to reach them; in many cases a letter and request for a meeting will be a good approach, but you may already have contacts who you can call or speak to directly.
- Assess your assets: does the LPC or your contractors have existing relationships that might be useful? How much time can everyone on the LPC offer?
- Work together: what else is happening in your area – are contractors using the NPA materials? Should the LPC highlight these to them?
- Set stretching targets – who will you meet and what will they do for you?

Principles for engagement

- For each person you meet you will need to tailor your messages. This means understanding your audience – ask yourself what they want and what they are interested in; how will the pharmacy proposals affect them?
- Think about who should make contact with them and how. Most stakeholders would rather talk to (in order of preference):
 1. Patients

2. Pharmacy teams
 3. LPC staff/officers
 4. National pharmacy bodies
- Every contact should be personal – write an individual letter or email every time, don't rely on a template.
 - Build relationships over time – this is a long running campaign so an initial meeting should leave scope for further discussions.
 - Always give people something to do – what are you asking them for at this stage?

How to engage with MPs – getting in touch

- Pick the right one! Contractors should write to their constituency MP. If they live in a different constituency to their pharmacy, they can write 'my pharmacy provides NHS care to the residents of Anytown and employs 5 Anytown residents'.
- LPCs can write to any MP whose constituents their contractors offer services to.
- Find your MP's contact details through their website. If you don't know which MP to search for, use the post code search at www.parliament.uk.
- Keep communications focused – MPs receive a lot of correspondence. Stick to the messages and be clear about what you are asking. Letters should be kept to a single page if possible.
- Send an email first, outlining the issue and asking for a meeting or a visit.
- If you don't hear back after a couple of days, try calling the phone number on their website.

How to engage with MPs – the meeting

- Offer to take your MP to a pharmacy. LPCs should look for pharmacy that best shows off how community pharmacies can and do provide a professional healthcare service.
- Choose a busy pharmacy where the MP can meet patients receiving clinical services.
- Let the MPs chat to patients and the pharmacy team, but be sure to brief them about the value of the services on offer along the way.
- If you don't know the answer to any questions, tell the MP you'll get back to them – make sure that you do!
- Remember to give them something to do – see the [MP briefing document](#) for ideas.
- MPs may prefer a meeting at their weekly constituency surgery – these can be productive meetings too so do not rule this out if they ask for it.
- Consider taking pharmacists, patients and charity representatives along with you to help get your messages across.

Offer the MP a briefing on the changes and how they can help – PSNC has produced a [template](#) which can be tailored to local circumstances. MPs can help by asking Parliamentary questions, writing letters to the Secretary of State asking what the impact on their constituents will be and by signing the EDM:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/business-papers/commons/early-day-motions/edm-detail1/?session=2015-16&edmnumber=1072>.

How to engage with local Councillors

- Pick the right one! Target the local (ward) Councillor for the pharmacy, but LPCs may also want to think about contacting:
 - ➔ Members of the Council's Health Scrutiny Committee
 - ➔ Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Find their contact details on the Council website – usually under the council and democracy section.
- Research and understand their role, as well as local issues they focus on. LPCs may wish to involve a pharmacist working within the relevant ward to involve in any discussions.
- Explain the threat to services for their residents.
- Give them something to do – ask for them to call NHS England, or to explain the plans to the Health Scrutiny Committee, or for the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider the impact.
- Ward Councillors and Health and Wellbeing Board representatives might consider this outside of their remit, but it is important that they are briefed.

Patient case studies: what makes a good case study?

PSNC and the other national pharmacy organisations are all seeking examples of pharmacies offering care that has made a real difference to patients. This helps us to demonstrate the value of the community pharmacy network. LPCs can help by collating these case studies from contractors at a local level, encouraging them to record them and send them in to them. LPCs may wish to use case studies to support their own local conversations, and you can email them to PSNC at: campaign@psnc.org.uk.

Here are a few notes on preparing good case studies:

- Make sure any story is about a *person* – ideally a patient, otherwise a member of the pharmacy team.
- All case studies should be about pharmacy's extraordinary contribution to patient care.
- Remember that something that seems normal to you could be extraordinary to someone else.
- Stories are more powerful than pleas for help.
- People should speak for themselves wherever possible – use quotes (make sure you have consent!)
- Be positive.
- Be brief – if you are writing a letter or an email, save some detail for a meeting.
- Pharmacies can record case studies electronically, or, if patients are keen to help, they may like to record short video clips of patients telling their own stories.
- Remember to cover the key points – what happened; what did the pharmacy do; how did this help the patient; how might this have helped the NHS or others?

Example case study

Joe Bloggs thought of pharmacies as places to pick up medicines, until he had his heart attack. The local pharmacy became Joe's first port of call for advice on his medicines, his other conditions and his general health. Joe went into the pharmacy every month, so the team noticed that three weeks after he started his treatment he was feeling short of breath and nauseous. The pharmacist spent 20 minutes talking to him and was able to refer him on for help. Joe wouldn't have thought to go to the GP otherwise, and couldn't get through to his specialist. Joe says that the pharmacy saved him from a trip to A&E.

Working with the local media

- Think about local/regional papers, radio, TV and web – who do you want to engage with?
- Know the outlet – before approaching any journalist, think about what area they cover and what kind of content they carry?
- Call them and ask who is best to speak to – develop a relationship with a key contact.
- Ask about how they would like to cover the story – do they need a news event or would they like to talk to pharmacists and patients about the impact of the plans? Could they visit a pharmacy perhaps, or would they like a comment or article written by a local pharmacist?
- Local media might cover an MP visiting pharmacies and asking questions in Parliament, or they might cover pharmacists talking about the impact of the proposals on patient care.
- Remember to keep the story local – why does the story matter to their audience, not pharmacy as a whole or the whole of England?
- Papers, TV and Web love visuals – what can they take photos of?
- If you need media training, you may want to sign up to one of PSNC's upcoming courses. See psnc.org.uk/lpcevents for more details.

How to engage with other stakeholders

- Consult the [template LPC stakeholder map document](#).
- Assess the relationships you have – cement existing relationships and form new ones.
- Use the messages document just as you would with MPs and Councillors.
- Think about why the proposals matter to your stakeholders or the people they represent – what might they be concerned about and how might they be able to help?

- Can these stakeholders help you reach the media or politicians – a comment from a patient group on a press release for example could help it to gain attention.

A note on contractors

- LPCs will want to keep contractors informed about the work they are doing towards the campaign. This can be done on the LPC website and via email updates and meetings.
- Contractors and LPC members are encouraged to sign up to PSNC's email newsletters to ensure they receive all the latest news from us. Go to psnc.org.uk/email.
- Pharmacy teams can take part in the campaign in a number of ways – see our [Briefing for contractors](#).
- LPCs should also encourage contractors and their teams to gather case studies and share these with the LPC.
- Contractors should also report any contact with MPs or local media back to the LPC.

Feedback

- PSNC and the other pharmacy bodies are here to help.
- Please update us on what you are doing – email any updates to campaign@psnc.org.uk.
- PSNC and the other pharmacy bodies will engage with politicians on a national level in tandem with any negotiations.
- Where we are in discussions with MPs we will involve the relevant LPC if at all possible.

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