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## **PSNC Briefing 049/15: Template press release highlighting pharmacy's role**

Following comments by Maureen Baker, Chair of the RCGP, complaining about the increases strain felt by GPs due to an increasing workload, Oldham, Tameside and Glossop LPC produced the following press release for their local press. It was subsequently published by *The Oldham Chronicle* and *The Manchester Evening News*. They have shared it here as an example which may be useful to other LPCs to use as a template.

### **Let pharmacists take the strain**

Local pharmacists are asking to be allowed to ease the current GP workload, after the head of the GPs' profession claimed that family doctors are so overworked they risk causing harm to patients' health. Dr Maureen Baker, Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, likened GPs to overtired pilots, after it was disclosed that there has been a 19% rise in GP consultations between 2008/09 and 2013/14, with a rise in the number of GPs of just 4.1% over the same period.

Pharmacists argue that, as highly trained healthcare professionals, they are ideally placed to alleviate the GP burden in a number of ways. One pharmacy based service that has attracted much national interest recently is the Minor Ailment Scheme, whose aim is to advise and treat in pharmacies those patients who would otherwise book a GP appointment. Unfortunately, recent negotiations between pharmacy chiefs and NHS employers failed to reach an agreement for a national service for 2015-16. The good news is that some Minor Ailment Schemes have been commissioned on a local basis, including one recently rolled out in the Tameside and Glossop area, with virtually 100% of pharmacies in that area delivering the service.

NHS England has also recently commissioned a national Community Pharmacy Flu Vaccination programme, running from September, which ties in with the seasonal flu vaccination campaign. The accessibility of pharmacies, their extended opening hours, and the option to walk in without an appointment have proved popular with patients seeking vaccinations.

David Walsh, of Oldham, Tameside and Glossop Local Pharmaceutical Committee, commented "In the past, some GPs have been resistant to pharmacy-based services, purely from a competition point of view, but the benefits are clear to see. Our LPC covers Oldham, Tameside and Glossop, and the Tameside & Glossop Minor Ailment Scheme, although in its infancy, is already proving popular with patients, doctors, and pharmacies. It illustrates what can be done when doctors and pharmacists work together. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, Oldham does not currently have a Minor Ailment Scheme, due to resistance from local GP groups. These schemes reduce NHS costs, and improve the delivery of healthcare to the patient, which has to be the goal for us all."

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