April 2016

**PSNC’s**

**Work**

**Template letter to MPs**

**Introduction and guidance**

Many LPCs and contactors have now made contact with their local MPs who have in turn passed on some of their concerns to health ministers. In reply, lots of MPs have received copies of a standard response letter from ministers. Here we set out a possible letter for LPCs or contractors to use to reengage with their MPs following those responses from the minister.

Although this template may provide the basis for communications with MPs**,** when responding to letters from your local MP, it is important to continue to raise your concerns from a local perspective, addressing any particular points made in correspondence between you and your MP.

You should also be sure to ask your MP to do something, such as pass on your letter to Alistair Burt, or arrange a meeting with them either in your constituency or in Westminster.

You may also like to read the [key messages](http://psnc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Key-campaign-messages-update.pdf) available on PSNC’s website for other possible points to raise in your letter.

**Template letter**

Dear [constituency MP]

Thank you for writing to Alistair Burt to raise my concerns regarding the proposed changes for community pharmacies, and for passing on his letter of response. I believe that this is a very important issue, and appreciate you raising it with the minister on my behalf. Having considered his letter, I regret to say that I still have significant concerns relating to the points made, and would once again appreciate your assistance in passing these on to the minister.

In his letter, the minister states that the Government believes that the proposed efficiency savings can be made within community pharmacy without compromising the quality of services or public access to them. Pharmacies in [constituency] are already stretched to capacity to provide the current level of service under the current funding arrangements. The Government and NHS have presented no evidence to suggest that the sector could bear the proposed funding reductions without making changes to staffing, service levels or opening hours.

The letter also states that technology could be used to deliver the required efficiency savings. 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.

As well as dispensing medicines, community pharmacy teams help people to stay well and out of GP surgeries and hospitals, to get the most benefit from their medicines, and to manage their health conditions. We provide face-to-face consultations, without an appointment, providing essential healthcare advice to the community. This prevents people from presenting at already overstretched GP surgeries and A&E departments. As the NHS strives to achieve the savings outlined in the minister’s letter, I believe community pharmacies are uniquely placed to help deliver efficiency savings through an expanded role that will enable them to do more to help patients, rather than a limited one. We are in need of support rather than changes that may lead to closures. I attach a flyer which explains the value that community pharmacies already offer and how our services could be developed so we can do more to help patients and to offer better value for the NHS.

Once again, I would like to stress that my pharmacy alone provides [x] hours of essential NHS services to [x] constituents every week. This level of service will simply not be possible if the changes go ahead. The letter states a desire to develop a clinically focused community pharmacy service, but these proposals appear to run counter to that ambition. [Adapt with local detail]

Given the essential services that pharmacy provides, I would like to ask the minister whether he would be willing 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.

I would be very grateful if you could pass on my comments. In addition, I would appreciate your continued involvement in this very worrying matter and ask you to consider attending an upcoming speed briefing event which is expected be held by the pharmacy organisations. I will pass on further details of that as soon as they are available.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

[Pharmacist and/or LPC]

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information or help with writing to MPs, please contact Zoe Smeaton, Head of Communications and Public Affairs.