

April 2016

## **PSNC Briefing 023/16: Community pharmacy in 2016/17 and beyond Engaging with local stakeholders**

### **Introduction**

LPCs, contractors and the national pharmacy organisations have been working hard in recent months to make the case for community pharmacy, following the letter of 17th December 2015 in which a range of proposals for community pharmacy were set out.

The sector has built support from a range of stakeholders and particularly from MPs, a number of whom spoke in support of community pharmacy in a debate on the Government's proposals. The consultation on the changes has now been extended until 24th May 2016, and this briefing sets out some actions that LPCs may wish to consider during that extended period.

### **The next phase of the campaign**

The campaign to date has been focused on three key themes, talking to stakeholders about 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

These principles remain at the heart of the campaign and with no major updates on the proposals from the Government we must continue do all we can to ensure that as many people as possible understand and support them. Since the launch of the campaign a number of additional facts and documents have been published, and engagement between now and 24th May can focus on using these to support the three key principles.

A separate document of [revised key messages is available from the PSNC website](#), but in particular LPCs may now like to talk to stakeholders about:

- **PSNC's service development proposals:** In response to the Government's call for ideas on how pharmacy services could develop in future, PSNC published a set of service proposals that include the introduction of a care package, which would see repeat dispensing becoming a default option where medicines are needed on a long-term basis, patient registration at pharmacies, and pharmacies offering enhanced medicines optimisation services.
- **NPA's consumer research:** The National Pharmacy Association (NPA) commissioned research in early 2016 which found that two in three people use a pharmacy at least once a month, two in five people would go their GP if it became more difficult to access their local pharmacy for the treatment of common conditions, and over a million people nationwide would go to A&E or other urgent care services.
- **The extension of the consultation:** The Department of Health (DH) confirmed its consultation on community pharmacy in 2016/17 and beyond has been extended until 24th May, giving more time for DH to develop its proposals working with PSNC and informed by other stakeholders.

## Possible next steps for LPCs

Many LPCs have been carrying out extensive campaigning work already and much of that work, such as keeping contractors informed and involved as well as engaging with the campaign on social media should continue. In addition to those ongoing activities, over the next six weeks LPCs may like to consider in particular:

- Organising an event to engage with local patient groups and representatives
- Responding to their local MP following the standard replies many MPs have received to their letters
- Asking MPs to attend a speed briefing event in Parliament
- Promoting the new messages as outlined above and in the key messages document
- Working with local patient representatives to gather patient views

## Organising an event

PSNC has produced a separate [Briefing document on organising a local event](#).

## Engaging with MPs

LPCs who have heard back from MPs who have received a standard response to their letters to ministers may like to use the [template letter available on the PSNC website](#) to engage once more with their MP.

LPCs can also ask their MPs to get involved in a number of ways:

- MPs can help local pharmacies by encouraging the Government to be clearer about its plans. MPs could write the Secretary of State, or table Parliamentary Questions, asking about the impact in their constituency.
- Specifically, MPs should ask about the impact of the changes laid out in the letter from the Department of Health and NHS England of 17th December 2015, titled 'Community pharmacy in 2016/17 and beyond'. MPs should ask how the plans will affect community pharmacies in their constituency.
- MPs could now ask for the Government's response to the proposals offered by the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee on investing in services.
- MPs could also ask why the Department of Health took the decision to cease negotiations on the introduction of a National Minor Ailments Service for England.
- MPs will have the chance to attend a speed briefing event being organised by the national pharmacy organisations. Further details on this will be available in due course.

## Engaging with local patient representatives

As well as hosting an event, LPCs may wish to contact local stakeholders directly to talk to them about their concerns and the consultation. Local stakeholders could be asked to:

- Submit a letter to the Department of health outlining any concerns they share with community pharmacy
- Encourage their members or those they represent to do so as well.
- Engage with local MPs and other politicians about any concerns they have and their views on what community pharmacy could do in the future.
- Hold local meetings to discuss community pharmacy and its future.
- Canvass the opinions of those they represent.

## Barnsley LPC and their local Healthwatch

In early March, MP for Barnsley East Michael Dugher wrote to Healthwatch Barnsley outlining his concerns regarding the Government's plans for the future of community pharmacy and Barnsley LPC Chief Officer Tom Bisset spotted an opportunity.

Tom emailed Healthwatch Barnsley asking if they would be interested to find out more about the Department of Health's proposals, highlighting the consultation documents as well as the [supportyourlocalpharmacy.org](https://supportyourlocalpharmacy.org) website which has been set up as part of the campaign against the plans. This led to a meeting at his pharmacy in mid-March with Carrienne Stones, Healthwatch Barnsley Manager, to further discuss the potential impact and what the organisation could do to support local pharmacies.

Carrienne subsequently decided to put together a survey to capture data Healthwatch could use to demonstrate the effect the Government's proposals would have on the local community. The proposed questions ask patients what they use the pharmacy for, how often they use the pharmacy, how they get to the pharmacy, and what they would do if there was no longer a pharmacy there. The precise wording was carefully considered as Carrienne did not want to create panic amongst the public about specific pharmacies closing.

Following some concerns about the short timeframe involved, both parties were relieved that the consultation period was extended by two months and agreed to postpone the survey until after the Easter break. Tom has since identified about a dozen local pharmacies they could work with who will ask people to complete surveys whilst they are waiting for their medicines to be dispensed. The plan is for people to put their completed surveys into deposit boxes that Healthwatch staff will later come to collect. The data would then be analysed and the findings used to submit a Healthwatch Barnsley response to the consultation; the results would also be sent to Healthwatch England.

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).