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May 2020

PSNC Meeting May 2020: Summary Report for Contractors and LPCs

PSNC met virtually on Wednesday 20th and Thursday 21st May 2020. This briefing summarises some of the key topics discussed for community pharmacy contractors and LPCs.

COVID-19: Negotiations on community pharmacy funding

Since March, PSNC has been engaged in wide-ranging negotiations with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) on COVID-19 related matters. Many of these are still ongoing, but significant outcomes so far have included:

- The payment of £300m in advance payments to contractors, split between March and April, to ease cashflow;
- The pausing of several aspects of the CPCF, including the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS), the launch of the Discharge Medicines Service (DMS) and the pausing of new service pilots;
- Funding of £250 per hour for pharmacy Bank Holiday openings;
- Monies towards the costs of protective measures in pharmacies, such as screens; and
- The launch of the Pandemic Delivery Service.

In April, PSNC also undertook a costing exercise to analyse the additional costs that COVID-19 had placed on pharmacy businesses, working with the other pharmacy organisations to gather evidence for this. That analysis was put forward to HM Government in the form of a bid for additional funding for the sector. The bid is currently with HM Treasury.

PSNC's Funding and Contract Subcommittee reviewed the evidence gathered to date as well as looking ahead to preliminary findings on April costs. They considered what additional requests for funding and cashflow support now needed to be made, as well as overseeing ongoing monitoring of margin delivery. Negotiations are ongoing, but further information will be announced to contractors as soon as agreement has been reached. See our latest funding announcement at: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/contractor-update-psnc-secures-further-50m-injection-to-ease-cashflow-challenges/>

COVID-19: Developments and Next Steps

Since the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community pharmacies became clear in March, the PSNC Committee has been meeting via videoconference on an almost weekly basis to oversee the latest issues and negotiations on behalf of contractors. NHSE&I is now keen to move the NHS into a recovery phase, and to inform our negotiations on this, PSNC spent much of its May meeting focused on strategic discussions.

PSNC members considered detailed next steps and risks for the sector, as well as key issues such as the PQS, the DMS and other elements of the CPCF. Funding analysis and negotiations were reviewed, and the Committee considered immediate priorities such as the NHS Flu Vaccination Service and the role that pharmacies could play in future COVID-19 services such as testing and a possible future pandemic vaccination. Updating our negotiations action list from April (see: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/covid-19-psnc-negotiations-update/>), PSNC will look to publish a revised list of actions shortly so that contractors can see some of the outputs of the May meeting and the topics of current negotiations. We will also work with the other pharmacy organisations to continue to present the sector's thinking and requirements to the NHS and HM Government.

PSNC Communications

PSNC's Communications and Public Affairs Subcommittee considered how PSNC's communications had changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Popular daily newsletters have been sent to more than 17,000 subscribers since March, and between February and April traffic to the PSNC website increased by 44% – the website had more than 315,000 unique visitors in April. The subcommittee considered the best ways to continue to make these communications useful and engaging, and also discussed a new plan for further engagement with the media, politicians and GPs. Working with the other pharmacy organisations, this plan will help to showcase the critical role that community pharmacy has played in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and it will continue to build wider support for the sector and the need for investment in it.

LPC Guidance and Resources

Recognising the need to quickly find new ways of working through the pandemic, in March PSNC announced that Richard Brown, of Avon LPC, would be doing some work to support our LPC engagement and to share best practice. The LPC and Contractor Support Subcommittee (LCS) heard about the LPC Rapid Action Team that Richard had established and how this had been helping to encourage two-way feedback between PSNC and LPCs. The group continues to meet but will review its function as the immediate COVID-19 peak in the UK passes and in light of the independent review into contractor representation and support (see below). LCS also considered plans to reboot PSNC's training and events offer for LPCs which had been paused through the pandemic and agreed to move ahead with a digital events programme for the rest of this year – further details for LPCs will follow as soon as possible.

Independent review of contractor representation and support

LCS considered the independent review that has been carried out by Professor David Wright to find ways to optimise PSNC and LPC working. Professor Wright had planned to publish his final report and recommendations in May. However, due to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic was having on everyone in community pharmacy at that time, this was postponed and the final report will now be published on **Friday 19th June**.

The report will set out a series of recommendations for how the support and representation offered for contractors can be improved and LCS considered how PSNC must help to ensure that contractors are engaged in all the next steps. This will initially happen through a webinar to be hosted by Professor Wright on the evening of **Monday 29th June**. Similarly, LPCs and PSNC will have the opportunity to question Professor Wright in a virtual meeting to be held early in July. Read the latest announcement on the review at: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/independent-review-into-contractor-support-and-representation-update-for-contractors/>

Legislative changes

PSNC's Legislation and Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee (LRA) considered the legislative changes that have been introduced as a result of COVID-19. In particular, they considered possible temporary changes around market entry and discussed PSNC's wish for the need to review Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments (PNAs) to be suspended for a year (this has now been announced: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/suspension-of-pharmaceutical-needs-assessments/>) LRA also developed early proposals to inform a PSNC case for the continuation of flexibility in the provision of services to help contractors to manage workload during the next phase of the pandemic.

For any queries about this PSNC Briefing please contact Zoe Long, PSNC Director of Communications and Public Affairs, at zoe.long@psnc.org.uk