

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee
Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee Agenda
Friday 14th May 2021 at 2pm
Meeting to be held remotely via Zoom

Members: David Broome, Tricia Kennerley (Chair), Clare Kerr, Sunil Kochhar, Fin McCaul, Jay Patel, Prakash Patel, Stephen Thomas.

1. Welcome from Chair
2. Apologies for absence
3. Conflicts or declarations of interest
4. Minutes of the last meeting and update on actions

Action

5. Communications and Public Affairs Strategy Update (**Confidential**)
6. 2020/21 Annual Report **Appendix 03/05/2021**
7. Website Upgrade Project **Appendix 04/05/2021**

Report

8. Pharmacy Communications **Appendix 05/05/2021**
9. Parliamentary Engagement **Appendix 06/05/2021**
10. Any other business

Subject	2020/21 Annual Report
Date of meeting	May 2021
Committee/Subcommittee	Communications and Public Affairs
Status	Not confidential
Overview	Initial work in preparation for PSNC's 2020/21 annual report.
Proposed action(s)	Reflect on the last annual report and consider topics for inclusion in this year's report.
Author(s) of the paper	Melinda Mabbutt

2020/21 Annual Report

Introduction

It is time to start thinking about compiling PSNC's 2020/21 annual report. The publication of the 2019/20 report was delayed by our work responding to COVID-19, but we now want to get back into the usual autumn publication schedule, in line with the new KPIs.

We have started with a look back at our work during this extraordinary year, comparing our communications during 2020/21 with those in 2019/20. Describing PSNC's work in response to COVID-19 (including on communications) will form a key part of this year's report, but as a subcommittee this also gives us a useful moment to reflect on the year just passed and to think about changes or improvements.

Key statistics on communications

Content creation

The table below looks at the main content types produced by PSNC.

	2020/21	2019/20	% difference
PSNC Newsletter emails	261	135	93%
News stories	699	527	33%
Videos/webinars	16	13	23%
PSNC Briefings	35	61	-43%

Whilst the number of briefings published has gone down, there have been considerable increases in the output of news stories and videos. This highlights a transition away from the publication of lengthier documents to more succinct and easier to digest content.

Engagement

The table below looks at the numbers of people who have been drawn to our content.

	2020/21	2019/20	% difference
Twitter impressions/reach	1,953,400	1,521,800	28%
Website visits	3,086,035	2,566,891	20%
Email subscribers	18,687	15,210	19%
Webpage views (unique)	5,103,822	4,420,829	15%
Email open rate (average)	34%	32%	6%

Substantial increases have been made in the number of people we are reaching and who are engaging with our content. It is unusual to see this level of growth in just one year and this has clearly been driven by pandemic-related information that pharmacies have needed. Next year we will have to work hard to try and maintain these levels, particularly with a new website expected to launch as well.

Reflection on 2019/20 report

PSNC's 2019/20 annual report was significantly delayed by the work required to support contractors through the COVID-19 pandemic but was published in February 2021.

The report covered the key achievements and ongoing projects that PSNC worked on during 2019/20 but, given the impact that COVID-19 had on the year since then, it also talked about PSNC's work to support and seek emergency funding for pharmacies.

The final report included the following sections:

- Comments from the CEO and Chair
- The year at PSNC (a timeline of achievements)
- Engaging contractors and learning
- Five-year contractual agreement
- Representing through national crises (i.e. Brexit, COVID and medicines supply)
- Annual accounts
- The year ahead

The report was available to view as an online flipbook reader, a printable PDF and a micro site (find these on the [About PSNC](#) webpage). Given the pandemic, we chose not to print hard copies to send to LPCs or take to PSNC events.

Subcommittee Action

The subcommittee is asked to:

- Provide any reflections on PSNC's contractor communications over the past year.
- Reflect on the 2019/20 report: what was good and what needs improving for this year?
- Consider possible topics for inclusion in the 2020/21 annual report:
 - Which elements of our COVID-19 work are the most important to get across?
 - Other than COVID-19, what topics should be included?
- Share any additional thoughts on preparations for the annual report.

Subject	Website Upgrade Project
Date of meeting	May 2021
Committee/Subcommittee	Communications and Public Affairs
Status	Not confidential
Overview	Description of early work on the upgrade of the main PSNC website and template LPC sites.
Proposed action(s)	Provide feedback on draft project timeline.
Author(s) of the paper	Melinda Mabbutt

Website Upgrade Project

Introduction

This paper sets out progress made on our website upgrade to improve accessibility and resilience, as well as to provide a fit-for-purpose website for PSNC (or a rebranded negotiating organisation) in line with the recommendations of the independent review into contractor support and representation. This upgrade looks to improve both the main PSNC website and the template sites offered to LPCs.

Appointing a website development agency

After developing a full project scope last year (with input from LPCs via a survey) the PSNC Communications Team spent some time talking to a number of different agencies and IT professionals, and this led to some pitches in front of the PSNC CEO and Chair of the Communications and Public Affairs Subcommittee. Following that session, and some further work to check references etc, we decided to appoint a London agency call Make: <https://makeagency.co.uk/>

The team at Make have set out a clear plan for the project that will include:

- Updating the administration (editing) areas of our websites to provide more flexibility and resilience;
- Keeping the same platform underneath to preserve content and therefore SEO rankings; and
- Using visitor data to help map out better site structures for our users.

A large part of the project will look at information architecture: exploring how we can best present all the information that we need to, how we can make the structure of the website more logical, and how we can put in place processes to make sure that we don't end up with another over-busy website in the future.

Starting the project

Timeline

Our ambition is to complete and launch the new websites by the end of the year. The draft timeline for the project can be summarised as follows:

	PSNC	LPCs
May	Site restructuring and reorganisation planning	Planning new website themes (design, functionality, structure and page templates) with working group
June	Complete restructure planning and start page template designs	Complete website themes work with working group ready to present to LPC Conference on June 23
July	Main site and structure development work	Guidance to be issued for LPCs to help them with content sorting and website design (this will include a training event with Make)
Aug	Main site and structure development work	LPC content sorting/website builds (LPCs to select from a range of support options from Make depending on whether they want to self-build new sites or have content migrated over for them)
Sept	Refinement of site with PSNC feedback, followed by security testing	LPC content sorting/website builds
Oct	Deployment of new website	Completion of website builds and deployment (possibly in phases)

Internal planning

With all PSNC teams looking after their own sections of the website, the upgrade is going to be a big project across the organisation. We are starting to plan for this, including setting up an internal working group. The working group members will be able to feed into the project in terms of design and functionality of the new website, but they will also play a critical role in helping us to disseminate information across PSNC and helping their respective teams to work through the upgrade project. Each Directorate will have a representative on the working group.

Engaging with LPCs

We have put in place an LPC Website Working Group to help inform the project. Members have varying levels of communications expertise and technical knowledge, as well as providing a good geographical range.

The group met early in May to agree on how it wants to work together, consider the draft project plan, share early ambitions for the project and discuss how the team at PSNC should best engage with and support LPCs throughout the project. We are trying to ensure that the timeline gives LPCs plenty of time to think about their websites over the summer and into the autumn and that LPCs will have all the guidance and support that they need to do this. The first working group meeting went well with LPCs positive about the upcoming changes to their website templates.

LPCs will also be able to engage with the project teams at PSNC and Make at the July LPC Conference, ahead of the majority of the work that LPCs will need to do to upgrade to the new website templates.

Subcommittee Action

The subcommittee is asked to:

- Provide any feedback on the proposed project timeline.
- Flag anything they want the team to bear in mind during the website development process, particularly the first information-sorting phase of work.

Subject	Pharmacy Communications
Date of meeting	May 2021
Committee/Subcommittee	Communications and Public Affairs
Status	Not confidential
Overview	An update on PSNC's communications with contractors, pharmacy teams and LPCs, including our digital statistics reports.
Proposed action(s)	None
Author(s) of the paper	Melinda Mabbutt

Pharmacy Communications

Introduction

This paper provides an update on work to communicate with community pharmacy contractors, pharmacy teams and LPCs. It also contains monthly statistics on PSNC's digital communications.

PSNC in the press

Negotiations for 2021/22 commence

Following PSNC's announcement that formal negotiations on Year Three of the Five-Year Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) had begun, the pharmacy press covered the story. You can read their coverage as follows:

[Pharmacy Magazine](#)

[The Pharmacist](#)

[Chemist+Druggist](#)

[Pharmacy Business](#)

Proactive communications work

Promoting C-19 test distribution service

The PSNC Communications Team developed a [local press release template](#) for the public launch of the C-19 test distribution service (or 'Pharmacy Collect'), providing LPCs with some suggested text and example quotes to use with their local media contacts. Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire adapted the press release for their area and the article was featured on the front page of the [Asian Express](#).

Contributing to #Pharmacy24

A social media event celebrating the work of pharmacy teams took place on 7th April 2021. We worked with the other national pharmacy bodies to support this event and created the following social media templates to provide inspiration and make it easier for people to join in. The templates drew on statistics from the first Pharmacy Advice Audit plus COVID-related work and services.

Social media templates for pharmacy teams

Social media templates for LPCs

The RPS, whose members organised the event, has informed us that c.5,500 posts worldwide used the #pharmacy24 over the course of the day, reaching around 1.9 million people across Twitter and Instagram.

Collecting case studies

The COVID-19 vaccination programme continues to provide opportunities for case studies. Since the previous subcommittee meeting, we have written articles focussing on collaborative working between local stakeholders. These included [Hootons Pharmacy in Bolton](#) (who are leading a mass vaccination site at the University of Bolton Football Stadium) and [Crest Pharmacy in Nuneaton](#) (who are using a local PureGym location as a vaccination site).

The Communications Team has begun looking through posts from the #Pharmacy24 event to find more case studies for the website. We are also open to any contributions from Committee Members.

Chief Executive Blogs and Vlogs

PSNC CEO Simon Dukes continues his monthly blogs and has begun regularly issuing video messages (or 'vlogs'). These are being actively promoted through the daily newsletter and on social media, as well as being given more prominent positioning on the website (i.e. as part of the rotating slides on

the homepage). Feedback has been positive, with contractors being appreciative of Simon's strong stance on the need to resolve funding issues. You can read and watch the blog via the below links.

[February's video](#) – describing the impact that the lack of fair funding for community pharmacy could have on patients and the public.

[February's blog](#) – discussing the wide range of community pharmacy services, and calling for the NHS to show more support for this critical part of primary care.

[March's video](#) – reporting on a Parliamentary debate about community pharmacy.

[March's blog](#) – considering the contribution pharmacies have made to the success of this season's expanded flu vaccination programme.

[April's video](#) – looking at the launch of the COVID-19 test distribution service.

[April's blog](#) – setting out expectations on the CPCF negotiations, highlighting the key issues that the Committee will face.

LPC communications and support

The addition of Digital Support and LPC Communication Officer Jamie Gilliam has provided some capacity to make improvements to our communications with LPCs. In recent months we have implemented a monthly schedule for LPC News, with emails due to be sent out towards the end of each month, and several additions have been made to the LPC Members' Area.

The new content for LPCs include webpages on:

- [PSNC and LPC Operations Team \(PLOT\)](#) – explaining the group's function and providing a breakdown of its members and future meeting dates;
- [Mental Health Support for LPCs and Community Pharmacy Teams](#) – outlining the mental health and wellbeing support available and signposting to several free resources; and
- [The Conference and Events Working Group](#) – describing its role and providing a breakdown of the group's members.

PSNC digital communications reports (February, March and April reports overleaf)

February overview: The most popular topics were the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS) Part 2 and the Discharge Medicine Service (DMS). The news story on Flu and the Covid Vaccine was also very popular. Our largest peak in website numbers was on Tuesday 9th February, the day PSNC published an update on its funding negotiations.

March overview: The most popular topics this month were the March 2021 Price Concessions, the Discharge Medicines Service (DMS) and the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS) 2020/21 Part 2. The news story on the increase in prescription charges to £9.35 was also very popular. Our largest peak in website numbers was on Tuesday 30th March, the day when PSNC's March edition of Community Pharmacy News and March price concessions were published.

April overview: The most popular topics were the NHS community pharmacy COVID-19 lateral flow device distribution service (Pharmacy Collect) and price concessions. The news story on the COVID-19 test distribution service being added to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) was also very popular. Our largest peak in website numbers was on Monday 1st April, the day PSNC published a news article about the decommissioning of Medicines Use Reviews (MURs).

Conclusion

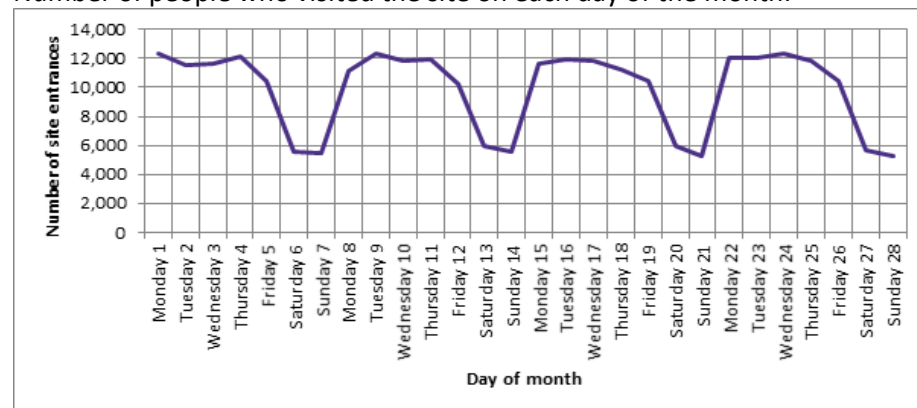
This paper has been created just for review; no action is required. However, subcommittee members are welcome to share their feedback or ask questions on any of the above.

PSNC digital communications report – February 2021

PSNC Website

Audience	February	January
Number of unique visitors (site entrances)	276,155	306,014
Number of unique pageviews	454,445	491,810

Number of people who visited the site on each day of the month:



Pages	Views
PQS 2020/21 Part 2	23,374
Discharge Medicines Service	21,570
Price Concessions	15,636
PQS 2020/21 Part 1	7,392
Covid-19 Vaccinations	6,090

News stories	Date	Views
Flu and the COVID-19 vaccine	16/12/20	8,360
Shielding advice extended & new patient cohort added	16/02/21	3,021
Opportunity for pharmacies to become C-19 vac sites	16/02/21	2,362
PQS: Preparing to declare – additional FAQs	27/01/21	1,914
PQS: Completing your declaration	29/01/21	1,684

PSNC Briefings	Views
041/20: Part 2 2020/21 Pharmacy Quality Scheme – Evidence checklist	1,504
003/21: Pharmacy Quality Scheme – Completing your declaration	897
005/21: Real Time Exemption Checking (RTEC) FAQ Sheet	624
023/19: SSPs – A guide for community pharmacy teams	411
024/20: PQS Essential Criteria Checklist for COVID-19 – Evidence checklist	307

Webinars/videos	Plays
GP CPCS animation	1,462
Digital Guide to the PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2021	606
CEO Video Update – February 2021	287
Future of Pharmacy animation	115
PQS 2020/21 Part 2 Digital Guide	107

PSNC Emails

PSNC Newsletter	February	January	Other health newsletters
Open rate	32.08%	33.6%	23%
Click rate	3.39%	4.3%	6%
Clicks to opens	10.61%	12.6%	20%

Social media

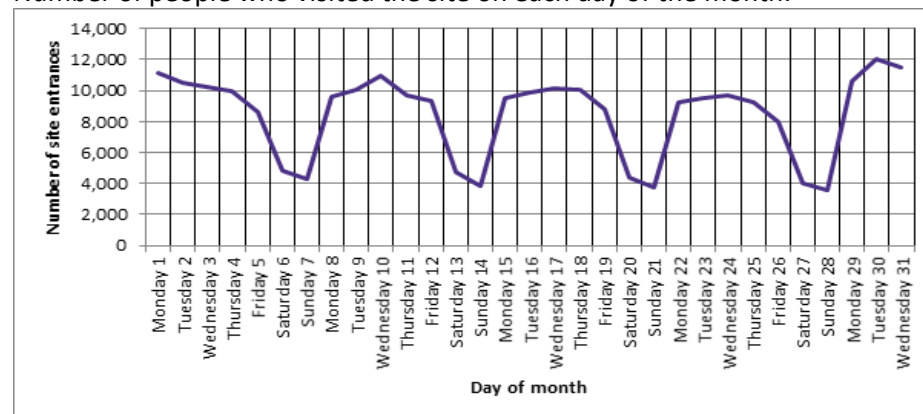
	February	January
Twitter reach	193,300	162,600
Twitter interactions	5,933	3,169
Facebook reach	4,349	5,407
Facebook interactions	266	541
LinkedIn reach	8,924	6,018
LinkedIn interactions	86	188

PSNC digital communications report – March 2021

PSNC Website

Audience	March	February
Number of unique visitors (site entrances)	261,927	276,155
Number of unique pageviews	424,261	454,445

Number of people who visited the site on each day of the month:



Pages	Views
Price Concessions – March 2021	21,623
Discharge Medicines Service	8,628
PQS 2020/21 Part 2	6,146
Controlled Drug prescription forms and validity	7,083
Covid-19 Vaccinations	5,317

News stories	Date	Views
Prescription charge rises to £9.35 from 1st April	24/02/21	5,060
C-19 test distribution service added to the CPCF	29/03/21	3,596
Download the new NHS Prescription Charge Cards	10/03/21	2,542
Pandemic Delivery Service: funding & self-isolators	16/03/21	2,832
No Smoking Day 2021	05/03/21	2,072

PSNC Briefings	Views
023/19: SSPs – A guide for community pharmacy teams	642
037/20: Serious Shortage Protocol: SSP08 – Salazopyrin® EN-Tabs 500mg	562
006/21: Summary of the Integration and Innovation DHSC White Paper	428
041/20: Part 2 2020/21 Pharmacy Quality Scheme – Evidence Checklist	231
016/19: EPS Controlled Drugs (CD) FAQs	211

Webinars/videos	Plays
GP CPCS animation	756
CEO Video Update – March 2021	463
Future of Pharmacy animation	169
Digital Guide to the PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2021	31
Digital Guide to the Pandemic Delivery Service	21

PSNC Emails

PSNC Newsletter	March	February	Other health newsletters
Open rate	40.2%	32.08%	23%
Click rate	4.2%	3.39%	6%
Clicks to opens	13.2%	10.61%	20%

Social Media

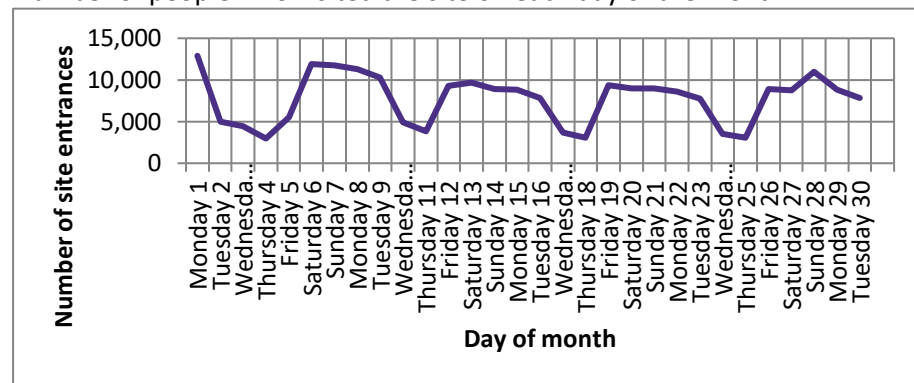
	March	February
Twitter reach	161,300	193,300
Twitter interactions	4,250	5,933
Facebook reach	5,365	4,349
Facebook interactions	560	266
LinkedIn reach	9,094	8,924
LinkedIn interactions	137	86

PSNC digital communications report – April 2021

PSNC Website

Audience	April 2021	March 2021
Number of unique visitors (site entrances)	231,560	261,927
Number of unique pageviews	377,881	424,261

Number of people who visited the site on each day of the month:



Pages	Views
C-19 Lateral Flow Device Distribution Service	29,819
Price Concessions	21,095
Controlled Drug prescription forms and validity	5,523
Discharge Medicines Service	4,756
New Medicine Service (NMS)	3,181

News stories	Date	Views
C-19 test distribution service added to the CPCF	29/03/21	4,318
Prescription charge rises to £9.35 from 1st April	24/02/21	3,833
C-19 test distribution service – promotional materials	7/04/21	2,702
C-19 lateral flow testing for pharmacy staff	17/12/20	1,919
FAQs on new prescription charges from April 2021	31/03/21	1,852

PSNC Briefings	Views
023/19: SSPs – A guide for community pharmacy teams	331
008/21: Completing the Data Security and Protection Toolkit 2020-21	192
016/19: EPS Controlled Drugs (CD) FAQs	191
028/20: Pharmacy opening hours in 2021	183
041/20: Part 2 2020/21 Pharmacy Quality Scheme – Evidence checklist	133

Webinars/videos	Plays
GP CPCS animation	559
CEO Video Update – April 2021	330
The Future of Pharmacy animation	95
PSNC Digital Guide to the Pandemic Delivery Service	23

PSNC Emails

PSNC Newsletter	April	March	Other health newsletters
Open rate	33.9%	40.2%	23%
Click rate	3.5%	4.2%	6%
Clicks to opens	11.3%	13.2%	20%

Social Media

	April	March
Twitter reach	161,611	161,300
Twitter interactions	3,968	4,250
Facebook reach	5,761	5,365
Facebook interactions	326	560
LinkedIn reach	5,058	9,094
LinkedIn interactions	55	137

Subject	Parliamentary Engagement
Date of meeting	May 2021
Committee/Subcommittee	Communications and Public Affairs
Status	Not confidential
Overview	A summary of PSNC's Parliamentary engagement in recent months.
Proposed action(s)	None
Author(s) of the paper	Jessica Ferguson

Parliamentary Engagement and Public Affairs Work

This paper presents an overview of parliamentary engagement and public affairs work since the last subcommittee meeting.

Parliamentary Work

Since the last meeting of the subcommittee, we have carried out various pieces of parliamentary work in support of the agreed communications and public affairs strategy.

LPC/MP Briefing Events

Throughout February and March, we continued our programme of virtual briefing events for MPs, working with another eight LPCs to host an additional three events, which were altogether attended by 12 MPs. These included Conservative MP James Cartlidge, who is PPS to Rishi Sunak.

Between December and March, 16 LPCs participated in these events, which were altogether attended by 27 MPs, who all heard about their local pharmacies' responses to the pandemic, as well as the financial pressures facing the sector. This work programme helped LPCs improve their relationships with local MPs, but was also beneficial to PSNC's own MP engagement, as many of those who attended these events later helped with other parliamentary activities in support of our asks on funding.

Briefing Parliamentarians on HMT response

Following the PSNC meeting in February, we actively briefed Parliamentarians a large number of MPs on our COVID-19 funding asks, encouraging as many as possible to help apply pressure to HM Government about our outstanding bids. This was done alongside meetings and briefings with Matt Hancock (Secretary of State for Health), Jo Churchill (the Minister with responsibility for pharmacy) and Craig Williams and James Cartlidge who are the PPS' to Steve Barclay and Rishi Sunak.

National media and Parliamentary activity was linked to the Budget in early March, specifically to try and put pressure on the Chancellor. Around 50 supportive MPs and Peers were sent a briefing containing all of our key messaging, including the sector's response to COVID-19, PSNC's audit data, and our funding asks. This was also shared with the LPCs, who were encouraged to contact their MPs and ask for their support, and the other pharmacy bodies were also briefed.

While ultimately the Budget made no mention of community pharmacy, MPs did come out in support of the sector in the following days of debate in response to the Budget:

- **Peter Dowd, Labour MP for Bootle, said:** "...I was disappointed to find that there was not, as far as I can tell, anything in the Budget statement that in any way sent a message of support to the pharmacy sector, let alone any practical or financial support for it. A key sector in the fight against COVID through the vaccination programme has been cut adrift, yet the Government still ask a sector that is under strain to pull out all the stops..."
- **Jackie Doyle-Price, Conservative MP for Thurrock, said:** "...There is a real issue with regard to the moneys advanced to pharmacies to deal with the consequences of the pandemic; it now needs to be clawed back and that is going to hit our pharmacists, who have been at the front end of the fight against the pandemic. I just remind Ministers to get together with the NHS to come up with a solution to this. Notwithstanding the fact that pharmacists are independent providers, they are very much part of our NHS and should be treated as part of the NHS family..."

Throughout March and April, we continued briefing MPs and Peers on our key messaging, reinforcing the need for urgent action to support community pharmacies. We further encouraged Parliamentarians to apply pressure to HM Government through actions such as written questions,

letters to officials and oral mentions in Parliament. We know that the following MPs have written to the Chancellor in support of community pharmacies, asking him to pledge additional financial support:

- Mike Amesbury, Labour MP for Weaver Vale
- Duncan Baker, Conservative MP for North Norfolk
- Clive Betts, Labour MP for Sheffield South East
- George Howarth, Labour MP for Knowsley
- Bill Esterton, Labour MP for Sefton Central
- Tom Hunt, Conservative MP for Ipswich
- Theresa Villiers, Conservative MP for Chipping Barnet
- Robert Jenrick, Conservative MP for Newark

In addition to letters, many MPs have also submitted written questions asking the DHSC and HMT about community pharmacy funding. The following examples have been submitted since the last subcommittee meeting:

- **Bill Esterson, Labour MP for Sefton Central**, asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent representations he has received from the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee on advance payments to pharmacies during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Cat Smith, Labour MP for Lancaster and Fleetwood**, asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to support community pharmacies.
- **Kate Hollern, Labour MP for Blackburn**, asking the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of waiving the repayment of the £370 million allocated to community pharmacies during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Julian Sturdy, Conservative MP for York Outer**, asking the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of current funding arrangements for community pharmacy.
- **Sarah Owen, Labour MP for Luton North**, asking the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allocate additional funding to community pharmacies to help them cover costs incurred as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

As part of our engagement with Peers, we briefed Lord Hunt ahead of a debate he led on 26 April, which was an opportunity to highlight concerns about the current pharmacy funding situation. We also briefed other Peers ahead of this debate, in which key mentions included:

- **Lord Hunt, Labour peer:** “... As the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee has pointed out, community pharmacies have remained open throughout the Covid-19 pandemic; they have adapted to provide services in a Covid-secure way for their local communities, and they are offering face-to-face advice and healthcare on a walk-in basis... The Government did provide £370 million in emergency funding loans to help pharmacies to stay open during the pandemic, in 2020. As I have explained, that money has been spent on covering the more than £400 million of NHS costs....The current funding envelope for the community pharmacy network is unsustainable. We need to do better. The NHS could learn and benefit hugely...”
- **Baroness Brinton, Liberal Democrat peer:** “...At this difficult time, pharmacies are also being asked to pay back the advanced funding provided by the Government to help deal with the extra demands relating to COVID-19, but we know that much of this funding did not even cover the extra costs that pharmacies have had to bear. With their other financial problems, as already outlined, plus extra costs not supported by government, many pharmacists will not even be able to make these repayments. If the Government do not relax the repayment timing—or, better still, turn these loans into grants—forcing repayments now may force

pharmacies into closure. That would be catastrophic, and a heavy burden for any Government to bear, especially one that has dished out billions of non-repayable grants to many other small businesses, which is what most of our community pharmacies are...”

- **Baroness Thornton, Labour peer:** “...Can the Minister explain why the NHS is refusing to increase investment in community pharmacies to support the NHS? Given the vital role they play, as everybody has acknowledged in this debate, they need certainty about their ability to play their full part in tackling the Covid healthcare backlog, for example...”

We will work to maintain the support of MPs while PSNC is in negotiations, including reviewing LPC resources to support them with MP visits, which are occurring in increasing numbers as lockdown lifts.

APPG Work

The following is an overview of the APPG’s work since the last subcommittee meeting.

Debate

Jackie Doyle-Price MP, Chair of the APPG, led a Westminster Hall debate about pharmacy on 11 March to discuss the effect COVID-19 has had on the sector. An additional 13 MPs contributed to the debate, plus Jo Churchill MP, who responded as Minister.

PSNC briefed our list of supportive MPs in advance and encouraged them to attend and many LPCs also sent invitations. Discussions were focused on the sector’s response to the pandemic. PSNC’s audit results were mentioned several times and there was also lots of support for the writing off of the £370 million advance payments. Tendo Consulting, the agency who coordinate the secretariat, helped brief the Chair and Group’s members and also recorded clips for use on social media.

Event

On 28 April, the APPG hosted a virtual drop-in event for Parliamentarians to hear from frontline pharmacists about their work throughout the pandemic, its value for patients and the potential for the sector to play a greater role in provision of primary care. Attendees were encouraged to support the Group’s calls for more sustainable funding for the sector to help ensure patients can continue to benefit from the vital support they receive from their pharmacies. In total the event reached 22 MPs and Peers, all of whom have been encouraged to sign a cross-party letter to show their support.

Cross-party letter

As part of the follow-up to the 28 April event, a cross-party letter has been put together to go to the Health Secretary and Chancellor, urging additional financial support for community pharmacies. Attendees at the event have been encouraged to put their names to the letter and work is ongoing to secure additional signatories.

‘Email Your MP’ tool

To support the APPG’s work, a new tool has been developed to help people contact their local MP and encourage them to support its work. Users need to enter a postcode and contact details to identify their local MP and then a template email can be sent asking the MP to support the APPG, including by attending events, joining as a member, or other supportive actions. This was in place in advance of the event on the 28 April and has since been updated to include the ask of signing the cross-party letter.

The tool is aimed at individuals who want to contact their constituency MP, so is not suitable for LPCs to use although they can promote it to their local contractors to help if they would like to write to their local MPs. We have publicised this to LPCs and via the PSNC newsletter, and the other pharmacy organisations have also promoted it.

Other Public Affairs Work

Submission to Health and Social Care Committee on DHSC's White Paper

In March, PSNC submitted written evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into the Department of Health and Social Care's White Paper. The response built on a PSNC briefing which summarised the implications of the Bill and what it could mean for community pharmacy.

New external affairs Twitter account

Since the subcommittee last met, a [second Twitter account](#) was launched as part of our communications and public affairs strategy, aimed at engaging with external stakeholders on pharmacy matters. The account is still in its early stages and is currently being used to promote positive content about pharmacy, such as sharing case studies, statistics with graphics, retweeting MP visits to pharmacies and supporting the APPG's Twitter content.

Initial analytics

March 2021

Impressions: 2,704

April 2021

Impressions: 20.4k

We intend to use the account more proactively to engage with MPs and over the summer will develop a series of pledge cards and graphics to support this.

Conclusion

This paper has been created just for review; no action is required. However, subcommittee members are welcome to share their feedback, questions or other ideas on any of the above.