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PSNC Meeting July: Summary Report for LPCs and Contractors

PSNC and its subcommittees met in Crewe on Tuesday 10th and Wednesday 11th July 2018. This briefing provides a summary of the discussions for community pharmacy contractors and LPCs.

Funding and margin delivery

The Funding and Contract Subcommittee considered the ongoing Margins Surveys for 2016/17 and 2017/18. PSNC is concerned about the financial pressure on contractors and this underpins the work of the New Funding Models Working Group. PSNC considered Category M reimbursement prices, noting the decrease in prices from July and the impact that this will have on contractors.

Since the meeting an [announcement has been made on Category M prices from August](#). In summary, PSNC negotiated a £15 million increase in Category M prices from August. The increase came because DHSC ceased margin recovery for now, recognising the impact on contractors' cash flow.

NUMSAS pilot service

The NHS Urgent Medicines Supply Advanced Service (NUMSAS) pilot is currently commissioned until the end of September but, following a positive interim evaluation of the service undertaken by NHS England, it is anticipated that the commissioning of the pilot will be extended.

The Service Development Subcommittee noted the beneficial impact of the service for patients and other NHS services, particularly GP out of hours providers, and the important work that pharmacies are doing to ensure that this happens. In anticipation of the long-term commissioning of the service being a subject which NHS England may wish to discuss in the forthcoming round of negotiations, the subcommittee considered potential improvements which could be discussed, based on feedback from contractors and the network of LPCs. A list of potential service amendments which could be discussed with NHS England was collated, which included:

- The need for access to an IT solution for all pharmacies providing the service, which should include the functionality for digital referrals to be made from NHS 111;
- A walk-in approach to the service; and
- Consideration could be given to extending the service to include referral from settings other than NHS 111 and integrated urgent care services, for example hospital emergency departments, subject to the business case for the service remaining strong.

The need for NHS 111 processes to be as streamlined and effective as possible, and for call handlers to be well trained on the process to follow for making referrals and the verbal explanation of the service provided to patients, was also noted.

2017/18 Flu vaccination service patient questionnaire results

The exceptionally positive results of the patient survey, which had been supplied by NHS England, were noted. The results are due to be published shortly and they are a testament to the hard work and commitment being shown by contractors and their teams in the provision of this important service.

2018/19 Flu vaccination service

PSNC welcomed the publication of the revised Declaration of Competence for all vaccination services, including the national flu vaccination service, which was developed by the Community Pharmacy Competence Group and is hosted on the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE) website.

An update was received on work being undertaken with NHS England, Public Health England, DHSC and the GP Committee of the BMA to develop guidance for pharmacies and general practices on how to manage the introduction of adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine (aTIV), particularly the staged supply of the vaccine in 2018. The guidance, which is expected to be published shortly by NHS England, will advise on targeting of the vaccine, but it will also note that no patients should be turned away if the appropriate vaccine is available. The approach which will be taken in 2018/19 will be supported by appropriate messages to patients in the national flu vaccination publicity campaign.

Several changes to the service have been agreed with NHS England and PSNC welcomed these developments. Information on these changes will be announced as soon as possible. A webinar explaining these changes, providing guidance on managing aTIV supply and describing the new submission process, is scheduled for 15th August ([click here to register](#)).

An update on the work of system suppliers and NHS Digital to allow information on administration of flu vaccines to be sent digitally to GP practices was provided to the PSNC Service Development Subcommittee. It is uncertain whether the tactical solution will be implemented this year.

Service support toolkits

Work is continuing on the development of toolkits to support the commissioning and provision of stop smoking and post-hospital discharge support services. PSNC was also given an update on the work which is being undertaken in partnership with several LPCs to develop further such toolkits. The initial focus of this work is a toolkit which will cover hypertension, atrial fibrillation, cholesterol and NHS Health Checks, with the whole care pathway for these disease areas being included particularly case finding services, condition management, monitoring, medicines optimisation and treatment.

EPS and digitisation developments

NHS Digital are continuing work with NHS England, DHSC and PSNC on the planning of the pilot of Phase 4 of the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS); this will mean that EPS becomes the default approach for prescribing by general practices, including where the patient has not nominated a pharmacy to dispense their EPS prescriptions.

NHS Digital are also continuing work with PMR system suppliers to develop and pilot functionality for real-time checking of patients' exemptions from prescription charges. PSNC received an update on the proposed approach to checking exemptions during the dispensing process; PSNC will continue work on this topic with NHS Digital and DHSC and further information will be made available to pharmacy contractors as soon as possible.

PSNC is also continuing to work with the NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) on its digitalisation programme, and the Manage Your Submission (MYS) Portal, which provides an online alternative to paper-based processes in the pharmacy, is currently being tested in around 90 pharmacies.

Extreme pandemic flu planning

The Committee was updated on initial discussions which had taken place with NHS England on planning for extreme pandemic flu situations. This follows previous work which was undertaken with NHS England to develop and agree a national Enhanced service specification for use of pharmacies as antiviral distribution points during a flu pandemic. A working group of PSNC members is to be formed to support further work on planning for extreme pandemic flu.

Press and communications

PSNC Chief Executive Simon Dukes has now given a number of interviews to the pharmacy press, setting out his first impressions of the sector and his ambitions for the future. Community pharmacists and LPCs are invited to contact the Chief Executive directly with their views, concerns or any other information via a new email address: chiefexec@psnc.org.uk The Chief Executive will also hold a webinar in the autumn.

PSNC has considered plans for a new podcast, which should give community pharmacies and LPCs a new way to learn about topical issues and PSNC's ongoing work. Options for this, including how LPCs could participate in it, will be explored over the summer.

Parliamentary lobbying

PSNC continues to work very closely with the other pharmacy organisations and LPCs to raise awareness and support for community pharmacy among Parliamentarians. Recent work has included supporting the All-Party Pharmacy Group inquiry into long-term conditions which culminated in [the publication of a report with a number of very supportive recommendations for community pharmacy](#). [An event on July 17th allowed 35 MPs to be briefed on the report](#).

PSNC also submitted a response and gave oral evidence to an inquiry by the Public Accounts Committee into price increases for generic medicines, in particular highlighting the work done by community pharmacies to ensure that all patients have the medicines they need.

Consultations

The following consultations were considered:

DHSC consultation on pharmacy legislation on dispensing errors and organisational governance

PSNC broadly gave support for the revised roles for the superintendent pharmacist and responsible pharmacist. There was discussion about the intention to deal with governance issues in the round but at the same time to leave the potential issue of 'supervision' until a later date.

GPhC consultation on developing the approach to regulating pharmacies

These proposals seek to move the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) to an inspection model that is similar to the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Whilst there was support for the overall intention, there was some concern with the proposal to make all inspections unannounced: this was considered to be both unnecessary and undesirable. PSNC considered that patient confidence in the GPhC was established with the option of unannounced visits in appropriate circumstances, and patient safety and learning, advice and improvement was improved by routine announced inspections (partly because work flows can be considered in advance and contractor representatives can be present for the inspection).

GPhC discussion paper on online pharmacies

PSNC supported these proposals, but it was noted that NHS online pharmacies are subject to terms of service and governance requirements as part of the delivery of NHS services and the GPhC should take this into consideration.

Claim and Payment issues

PSNC considered various issues around payments including losses associated with the introduction of EPS, reasonable claims for payment that are not paid due to a minor technical issue and the potential loss of remuneration for contractors if, subsequent to a claim for Quality Payments, it is found that they did not meet one of the gateway criteria (for example the failure to validate an unchanged entry on NHS Choices). PSNC considered that there should be a fair system to resolve disputes about claims of a significant value.

Pharmacy Provider Assurance

PSNC provisionally accepted NHS England and NHS BSA's national provider assurance as 'business as usual' subject to continued scrutiny and assessment of its proposed national system for the recovery of overpayments, which is currently untested.

LPC support and resources

PSNC's LPC and Contractor Support Subcommittee approved the plans for the LPC Conference being held in Birmingham on 26th September – registration for the event opens shortly. The subcommittee also received a report on the national meeting of LPC Treasurers when PSNC's enhanced HR support for LPCs was discussed and welcomed.

The latest in PSNC's '[LPCs in the Spotlight](#)' series was highlighted and it was agreed that the feature on Community Pharmacy Surrey and Sussex provided food for thought to other LPCs considering a restructure.

PSNC heard about the plans for the latest event for the PSNC Leadership Academy. The event has since taken place and brought together experienced LPC officers, members and staff, all recognised as leaders in their LPC work. During the day the LPC leaders were able to collaborate on strategic planning issues relevant to LPCs, review and enhance their personal leadership skills, identify and action plan common LPC challenges and build productive networks and relationships. A summary of the day's outcomes will follow and in the light of the enthusiastic feedback further events are being planned.

PSNC also considered a number of topical issues for LPCs. Upcoming guidance, resources and activity will include:

- Regulations workshops for LPCs in October;
- A new communications strategy template for LPCs;
- A survey on provider companies to capture the issues that people are facing with these;
- A survey of LPCs on topical issues for the upcoming LPC Conference;
- Information on options for HR support for LPCs;
- Guidance for LPCs on legal matters such as tax treatment of day rates and other employment matters; and
- Further guidance to LPCs considering incorporation.

Community pharmacy and technology

Making better use of technological and digital developments is a key priority for the health service and has been mentioned as a specific focus by both the Prime Minister and new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Recognising the need for community pharmacy keep up with developments, PSNC members had a broad discussion in groups on the opportunities that technology and online services could present for community pharmacies. The outcomes from the group discussions will be collated and used to inform future activities and thinking in this area.

New Health and Social Care Secretary

News that Matt Hancock MP had been appointed to the position of Health and Social Care Secretary broke as PSNC met. The Committee looked forward to working with Mr Hancock and has written to welcome him to his new role, highlighting the value of community pharmacy.