

February 2021

Summary of PSNC Meeting for contractors and LPCs

PSNC met virtually on Wednesday 3rd and Thursday 4th February. This briefing provides a summary of the key points and issues discussed by the Committee.

Ongoing Funding Negotiations

PSNC has two as yet unresolved funding bids with HM Government: one on COVID-19 costs and the second for an uplift to wider Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) funding. The Committee considered both of these negotiations ahead of a further round of meetings with Ministers.

Further information on the bids and ongoing negotiations has already been published at: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/update-on-psnc-funding-negotiations/>

Although PSNC is pleased with progress on COVID-19 vaccinations and looking forward to pharmacy playing a growing role in this critical effort, the Committee is deeply concerned about the impact that any payback of the advance payments would have on patients, contractors and on wider pharmacy services.

Action Planning/Communications Strategy

PSNC now believes, regrettably, that alongside our ongoing private discussions with Government and officials, community pharmacy will increasingly need to go public with its concerns about funding. For PSNC this will focus on two areas:

- Making more noise to showcase the value of what pharmacies do; and
- Publicly holding HMG and NHSE&I to account for their funding decisions and the impact that those can have on patients.

The committee considered a new strategy to make this happen, working with the other pharmacy organisations and LPCs. Further details on the plan and on how LPCs and contractors can support will be shared following early discussions with the other national pharmacy bodies.

Service Development

PSNC's Service Development Subcommittee spent time considering how an additional cohort of self-referring patients could be supported via the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service and how these patients would be differentiated from those being supported under the existing support for self-care Essential service. The discussions on this topic will feed into a proposal to be made for development of the CPCF to NHSE&I and DHSC.

The subcommittee also considered potential options for the 2021/22 Pharmacy Quality Scheme, including proposals submitted by LPCs. Work to support the development of substance use services provided by community pharmacies was reviewed, reflecting the change in frequency of the use of supervised consumption services during the pandemic. This work has been undertaken collaboratively with a group of LPC volunteers and the final proposal will be shared with all LPCs for use in local discussions with substance use commissioners and services.

The prioritisation of service development work was considered for the year ahead, recognising the prime focus would be on supporting negotiations for changes to the CPCF and the development of resources to support

contractors and LPCs to implement any agreed changes. An update on the ongoing work with the other pharmacy bodies and NHSE&I to explore the potential for community pharmacies to play a greater role in the COVID-19 vaccination programme was provided.

Potential changes to the New Medicine Service were considered, following the work of an NHSE&I organised working group to consider options for growth in the conditions and medicines covered by the service. Updates were also provided on community pharmacy IT topics, including the enhancement of the pharmacy information flows standards, being undertaken by the Professional Record Standards Body on behalf of the NHS.

Community Pharmacy Funding

The Funding and Contract Subcommittee considered an update on C-19 costs: these are being finalised for December 2020 and negotiations on funding to cover contractors' COVID-19 costs are ongoing. Work on possible new funding models is ongoing with the PSNC office working closely with interested Committee Members.

The subcommittee noted reports that item volume has fallen and this will be discussed with DHSC to ensure correct delivery of fees. Similarly margin delivery is under constant surveillance and looks reasonable following Drug Tariff support and falling medicines prices over the summer.

PSNC Levy Funding

PSNC set its budget for 2020/21 and agreed to keep the LPC levy request flat for this financial year. This was possible because PSNC has made savings over the past year (on meetings and travel) during the COVID-19 pandemic and expects these to continue beyond March 2021.

£90,000 worth of those savings have been given to the Review Steering Group (RSG) to kickstart their work to oversee and commission work to resolve some of the issues identified in the Wright Review.

Further information on the work of the RSG is available at: <https://pharmacy-review.org/>

Legislation and Regulatory Affairs

The Legislation and Regulatory Affairs subcommittee considered issues around hub and spoke dispensing between different legal entities that could be addressed under the Human Medicines Regulations, NHS Regulations and GPhC standards. They noted that the DHSC had started a pre-consultation discussion on the pending consultation on the issue which PSNC will be involved in.

The subcommittee also considered:

- Potential changes to the NHS market entry regulations which could seek to limit a reported unwarranted increase in the supply of Essential Services following the granting of new pharmacy applications;
- The fact that the level of pre-registration funding is lower for pre-registration trainees in community pharmacy compared to hospital;
- A response to the NHS Resolution consultation on the potential award of interest on any NHSE&I recovery of overpayments from contractors;
- That a shorter more flexible approach to the Community Pharmacy Patient Questionnaire (CPPE) should be canvassed with NHSE&I; and
- The fact that the publication of Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments that had been delayed by one year to April 2022 might need to be delayed by a further year.

London Weighting

Following a request from Pharmacy London, PSNC considered the possibility of a London weighting to boost income for contractors in the capital. The Committee considered a number of factors such as precedent, existing cost data

(including data from the most recent Cost of Service Inquiry), sources of funding and political acceptability. They noted that wage rates for pharmacists in London were not out of line with those in other areas of the country.

The Committee felt that the principle of a national contract was an important one and that we needed unity now more than ever to maintain negotiation leverage. PSNC Members did feel the request raised interesting issues around an 'averaging contract' which would be factored into work on new funding models, but they felt unable to single out this one element of the differences amongst contractors around the country without dealing with others.

LPC Support and Resources

The LPC and Contractor Support Subcommittee (LCS) discussed and agreed priorities for building on the current governance support offered to LPCs. Central to this work is a fresh approach, with the focus firmly on the responsibility of all LPC members, with more interactive, innovative and proactive ways to change the culture in LPCs, through a better understanding of the practicalities of governance and putting governance at the heart of the committee's work.

The Subcommittee heard about plans for the annual national meeting of LPC Treasurers (Wednesday, 10th February 2021). This year the event will focus on the launch of the LPC Finance Guide, a new support for LPCs in 2021.

LCS also reviewed plans for the PSNC's training and events offer for 2021 for LPCs with a digital events programme for the rest of this year – further details for LPCs will follow as soon as possible. There will be four conferences in 2021: March, June, September, and November; a new steering group was being formed to help plan the events. The PSNC & LPC Operations Team (PLOT), a weekly meeting between LPC Chief Officers and policy leads from the PSNC leadership team provided a highlight report to LCS. PLOT has considered a range of topical items, to help support and align the work of LPCs.

Contractor Support

The Subcommittee reviewed a summary of the vast range of resources developed to support LPCs and contractors with the implementation of changes to the contractual framework during 2020/21 and was asked for feedback to support future development for 2021/22.

It was agreed to include equality, diversity, and inclusion as a standing agenda item, as the profession-wide work continues, following the joint Statement of Principles for Inclusive Pharmacy Professional Practice. PSNC is committed to working closely with the NHS and our fellow national pharmacy representatives to help community pharmacy to remain a sector that is accessible for everyone.

Communications and Public Affairs

As well as the wider communications strategy, the Communications and Public Affairs Subcommittee considered PSNC's annual report for 2019/20 which is now available at: <https://psncannualreport.com/>

Work to find a provider to upgrade the PSNC and LPC websites is ongoing and PSNC hopes to be in a position to sign contracts and start this work early in the spring with a view to upgraded websites going live over the summer.

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information, please contact the [PSNC Communications Team](#).