

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee
Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee Agenda
Monday 19th October 2020 at 12 noon
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

Action

5. Autumn/Winter Public Affairs Plans **Appendix 02/10/2020**
6. Any other business

Subject	Autumn/Winter Public Affairs Plans
Date of meeting	October 2020
Committee/Subcommittee	Communications and Public Affairs
Status	Not confidential
Overview	Considering public affairs messaging and actions
Proposed action(s)	Consider the questions posed on tactics and priorities
Author(s) of the paper	Zoe Long

Autumn/Winter Public Affairs Plans

Introduction

Following on from the subcommittee's consideration of key communications messages for PSNC we would like to give some thought to public affairs activities and how we can use these to support the ongoing negotiations on COVID-19 funding.

Update on Parliamentary and External Stakeholder Work

Messaging and Priorities

Following the last subcommittee meeting and conversations with LPCs the office has finalised the communications messaging grid and shared this with LPCs. Early feedback suggests they have found this useful in handling media and other queries. We will keep this resource updated and it should help to ensure that the sector is aligned in external messaging as far as is possible.

The office also worked to prioritise tactics for disseminating the key messaging for autumn/winter with the first priorities being community pharmacy's value and role throughout COVID-19 (including using evidence from the PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit) and pharmacy's role in the NHS flu vaccination programme. These are the messages that we are now working to get across to MPs and others.

Briefings and Resources

To help this work we are producing (with help from designers) a number of resources as follows:

- Social media resources plus an infographic on the Pharmacy Advice Audit;
- An animation on the value of community pharmacy's role through the pandemic;*
- Social media resources highlighting pharmacy's role in the pandemic and asking patients and the public to respect pharmacies; and
- MP briefings on pharmacy's role in the flu vaccination service, pharmacy's role in the pandemic, and the need for further funding for the sector.

*Further animations will follow on the GP CPCS (NHS E&I have agreed to work with us on this) and on the Discharge Medicines Service (DMS).

Parliamentary Engagement

The office has been keeping key supportive MPs up to date with PSNC's funding asks and these are being reflected in an upcoming letter to all MPs from APPG Chair Jackie Doyle Price. This will ask MPs to join the group and to support a letter to Matt Hancock stressing the value of the sector and the need to support it appropriately.

The office is using the MP briefings mentioned above to engage directly with a wider range of MPs and to support LPCs in their MP engagement – the objective being to build a wider network of MPs who have a better understanding of the sector and can be our advocates in Parliament, and to keep them engaged.

Key Challenges for Consideration

In the past, PSNC and the other pharmacy organisations have put considerable resource into engaging with MPs and others (patient groups and charities) to promote community pharmacy and in particular the wider roles that pharmacies could play in the NHS. This has had some positive results as reflected in the vision for the sector set out in the five-year CPCF, which aligns with the sector's own vision, and

in the numerous supportive statements about pharmacy from politicians and the regular campaigns from the NHS to promote pharmacies.

But despite all of this apparent goodwill towards the sector, which seems to extend all the way up to Ministers and the Secretary of State for Health (and the Medical Director for NHS E&I who recently mentioned pharmacies in a national COVID-19 press conference), we still face incredibly difficult negotiations on funding – whether for services, COVID-19 costs, or baseline funding. There seem to be fundamental blocks in the way that officials, particularly those from HM Treasury and NHS E&I view the sector, with pharmacies often treated as retail businesses, and a determination to pay pharmacies only to cover basic costs, rather than taking into account overheads and fair returns, or value.

The challenges set out above are being considered by the Negotiating Team on an ongoing basis, but the subcommittee can support this. In today's session we will have a broad discussion on how we can begin to tackle some of the challenges outlined above through our public affairs work. The office will use outputs from the discussion to inform the development of a new Whitehall Strategy for PSNC.

Public Affairs Tactics

In the campaign against pharmacy funding cuts in 2016 the sector used a variety of tactics to influence HM Government including a patient petition, significant Parliamentary activity (with debates, PQs, and numerous APPG and briefing events) and of course the Judicial Review process. Much of the campaigning was very hostile to HM Government, and despite gaining some support from patients and some sympathy in the media, it failed to prevent the funding cuts.

Looking at other more positive pharmacy influencing work, as well as at other sectors, a range of public affairs tactics have been used to influence policy and some of these could provide inspiration for our own planning. Below are some examples of strategies which others have employed successfully, and some which community pharmacy has in the past used to have a greater impact on policy. These are worth considering, keeping in mind caveats about financial costs and capacity at PSNC.

- Formation of coalitions eg the Taskforce for Lung Health. These coalitions have full Secretariat support with their own annual plans, and regular formal meetings. They publish reports, make recommendations, and run communications campaigns.
- Use of Select Committee Inquiries giving a platform for evidence to be heard, a forum to challenge policy makers and legitimacy to recommendations.
- Development of industry best practice standards to give sectors increased legitimacy and improve their wider reputation (less relevant for healthcare which is already regulated).
- Use of coordinated local media and data-driven campaigns to target MPs and change public opinion. Local media push days can be amplified by big businesses in the national media.
- Mobilising members to lobby politicians – the LPC network is ideal to support this and has done so in the past for community pharmacy.
- Use of new evidence/research demonstrating the benefits (or disadvantages) of some policies – PwC and more recently EY have both produced reports for community pharmacy.
- Polling of MPs and the public to demonstrate the strength of opinion about a policy.
- Consistent and creative use of national media including public letters, campaign launches, case studies, comment from big players in the sector, etc.
- High profile advertising campaigns to support key policy asks.

Subcommittee Action

Some specific questions for the subcommittee to consider are:

1. Who at HM Treasury and NHSE&I (and any other organisations) are our targets?
2. What tactics can we use to get to those people and to persuade them of our case?
3. What are our key messages and do we need more evidence to help us to get them across?
4. Who else can we ask to help us to influence these stakeholders?
5. How can we use the patient voice to help our case?
6. How can we use the national and health media to help us to make our case?
7. What can MPs do to help pharmacy with any local discussions or negotiations and how should we encourage them to do this?