

February 2023

PSNC Briefing 005/23: Summary of February 2023 PSNC Committee Meeting

PSNC Members were largely focused on their deep concerns about the ongoing funding crisis affecting the sector, including sharing devastating personal stories from pharmacy owners who are battling against the odds to keep their pharmacies open. Members also reflected on the feedback from PSNC's online engagement events where contractors discussed the measures they are already taking or would consider doing to protect patient safety and cut costs. [See more on these events here.](#)

Overview of the February Committee Meeting

The current pressure facing community pharmacies is untenable and without urgent action from Government we are likely to see a significant increase in temporary and permanent pharmacy closures. Despite all our warnings about this, DHSC and NHS England are thus far refusing to offer emergency funding for the sector. We have written to them once again to make this clear and we are continuing with our high-level influencing and campaigning work, doing everything that we can to fight for a better deal for our sector.

The Committee also considered:

Price concessions: Some of the options on the table from DHSC suggest some incremental 'sticking plaster' relief and these are likely to be taken forward. However, the Committee felt that considering the volatility of the drugs market and the fact that contractors are taking all the risks without being reimbursed sufficiently, the only reasonable course of action is long-term structural reform and an uplift in the Tariff.

Regulatory easements: The Committee were very disappointed by piecemeal options on the table from NHS England. They felt these made it clear that NHS England and the Department have no intention of relieving the pressure on all contractors in any meaningful way. This is all the more dismaying given that we put more substantial proposals forward many months ago, and that the help we are asking for would cost nothing.

Transforming Pharmacy Representation (TAPR): The Committee considered the significant progress that has been made on this programme of work, noting in particular the work being done to support LPCs through local changes; the imminent rebranding of PSNC as Community Pharmacy England to strengthen our influence with policy-makers; and the progress of the vision and strategic options work being undertaken with Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund.

Governance: PSNC's election processes are now underway with guidance on LPC elections finalised. Following the Review Steering Group (RSG) recommendations, PSNC has implemented many changes, including reducing the size of the Committee and making initial changes to the PSNC and LPC Model Constitution and Rules. To implement the remaining governance recommendations, PSNC agreed to start a wider governance review in April, to be led by an external consultant.

Contractor Engagement: The Committee considered its ambitions to be more closely engaged with fellow contractors across the country and a plan is in development for this, to be implemented by Community Pharmacy England from April.

PSNC Budget and LPC levy: The Committee agreed the operating budget for 2023/24 including the total levy demand to be collected from LPCs in England. This is the first PSNC levy increase in eight years, supported by contractors through the vote on the RSG proposals in 2022.

Next Steps

The Chief Executive has written to the Department and NHS following the Committee Meeting re-stating the challenges, and urging them and Ministers to work together with PSNC to relieve some of the critical pressures in the sector.

High-level influencing and media work is also continuing, including plans to use the results of the Pharmacy Pressures Survey. We are working in particular to influence the Government's Primary Care Recovery Plan which is currently in development.

A fully funded Pharmacy First service would be at the heart of any solution for pharmacies, but we have told DHSC and NHSE that they must concurrently address matters such as:

- **Increasing volumes of existing services and the pressure this puts on core funding;**
- **Regulatory easements** to ensure a level playing field for all pharmacies;
- **Diverting some of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) funding underspend** direct to pharmacies or halting further recruitment of pharmacists into PCNs and GP practices;
- **Delivery of promised efficiencies** – supervision and skill mix changes, Hub & Spoke and Original Pack Dispensing; and
- **Structural reform of the Drug Tariff** and regulation of the wholesale sector.

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information, please contact commsteam@psnc.org.uk.