

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee
Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee
Minutes from the Meeting held on 16th December 2022 at 10.45am

Members of CPA present: David Broome, Tricia Kennerley (Chair), Fin McCaul, Clare Kerr, Prakash Patel

In Attendance: Alastair Buxton, Mike Dent, Sam Fisher, Jamie Gilliam, Jas Heer, Melinda Mabbutt, Rhys Martin, Has Modi, Janet Morrison, Zoe Long, Indrajit Patel, Sian Retallick

Apologies: Stephen Thomas, Jay Patel

Conflicts of interest: None received.

Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20th October were approved by the subcommittee.

Matters arising: There were no matters arising. Updates on actions were given as follows.

Action 1: A toolkit of influencing resources for contractors and LPCs, including a range of briefings, has now been published on the website.

Action 2: Work on the longer-term public affairs plan continues but has been slowed by the team's focus on the supply situation concerning antibiotics. All short-term work is continuing.

Action 3: A November update on the TAPR programme has been published. The subcommittee noted the positive feedback received from LPCs on this.

Action 4: The initial consultation for the vision project, which took the form of a short online questionnaire, has now closed and the responses are being analysed by the PSNC Office. The need for careful communications about the vision was noted given the current extreme pressures.

Action 5: The CPA meetings for the first half of 2023 have now been scheduled, with the January meeting likely to be a single topic workshop.

Item 1: CPA workplan and planning (Confidential)

1.1 Zoe Long outlined the workplan shared in the agenda – this had previously been shared with RDF.

1.2 The need for the team to be able to flex to meet changing and urgent demands was noted.

ACTION: Office to consider setting out key points of the workplan by month.

Item 2: Projects update: Vision, Rebrand and TAPR

2.1 Zoe Long gave an update on the project to rebrand PSNC to Community Pharmacy England (CPE).

IE Brand very recently presented their research findings to the team, looking at perceptions of PSNC. The research found that although PSNC is seen to be very expert, contractors and others broadly feel that PSNC is too aloof, not transparent enough and is too submissive when it comes to national negotiations. The poor outcomes achieved for contractors by PSNC was noted as the main cause for the generally poor perception of PSNC.

- 2.2 The research from IE Brand showed that the planned rebrand was seen to be a positive step, and IE Brand has developed a set of recommendations for PSNC to consider as it rebrands.
- 2.3 An update on the TAPR programme was published in November, including a range of new resources for contractors and LPCs.
- 2.4 The team is currently considering how we will use the new vision as part of our public affairs work through 2023. This will begin once a draft from Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund has been shared and consulted on. The team is also starting to think about planning for the vision's launch.

ACTION: Office to share summary findings and recommendations from IE Brand with the Subcommittee ahead of January workshop.

Item 3: Pharmacy communications and media work

- 3.1 PSNC has increased its contractor facing comms in recent weeks, telling people about the work we are doing on their behalf, particularly in relation to the national press.
- 3.2 We also held two contractor engagement events with each of these having over 100 attendees. The feedback from contractors at these events unsurprisingly painted a bleak picture for the sector, with the live polls conducted during the meetings showing contractors are under extreme financial pressure and are fearing for their future.
- 3.3 Subcommittee Members felt that PSNC's recent contractor engagement events had been positively received by contractors and that PSNC should do more of these types of events. It was noted that the chat function at these events can distract from the key messages that are being shared and it was suggested that in future the chat function be for questions only.
- 3.4 Fin McCaul noted that PSNC only tends to hear from those with extreme opinions at events like these and that a mechanism needs to be found to reconcile the differences in views between the different parts of the sector on key issues.
- 3.5 Sam Fisher commented that future PSNC communications need to be more proactive about what PSNC actually does and to emphasise the level of expertise within the different directorates at PSNC.
- 3.6 The importance of contractor WhatsApp groups was discussed as well as the difficulty of engaging with contractors via this medium. The importance of regional reps and other voices to communicating with contractors was noted.
- 3.7 Sam Fisher suggested that following the planned restructuring of the PSNC regions, a mechanism should be put in place to enable the sharing of responsibilities between PSNC regional representatives and their CCA colleagues.

ACTION: The team will consider use of WhatsApp and other communications channels and discuss this with Regional Representatives early in 2023.

Item 4: Parliamentary Engagement and Public Affairs

- 4.2 Since the last committee meeting PSNC has published a Four Point Plan and a briefing for MPs on pharmacy closures. The briefing has been sent to target MPs with a plea that they write to the Minister on the sector's behalf. A number of actions have already fallen out of this, with some MPs wanting to write letters and others wanting to hold a Parliamentary debate in the new year. George Foote has also drafted a cross-party letter which is awaiting sign-off.
- 4.3 Janet, along with Chief Executives from across the sector, has signed a letter to the Secretary of State asking for urgent support and setting out what more pharmacies could do if properly enabled. The Times may cover this in the coming days.

4.4 PSNC and the other pharmacy organisations, particularly the National Pharmacy Association (NPA), have been receiving a high number of requests from contractors about what more they can do to help influence decision makers. PSNC will host a meeting with the other pharmacy bodies in January 2023 to discuss the production of a joint set of patient-facing resources.

4.5 Subcommittee Members agreed that contractors should be encouraged to write to their MP and that following this, contractors should be asked to encourage their patients to write to their MP. The difficulty of fostering the level of understanding that would be required by patients to write to their MP was discussed alongside the need for clear messaging.

4.6 The Subcommittee noted the rising frustration among patients who have been struggling to get access to their medication and dealing with temporary closures.

4.7 George Foote informed the group that Taiwo Owatemi is now the Chair of the Pharmacy APPG.

ACTION: Office to host joint meeting of pharmacy organisations with a view to taking forward patient-facing public affairs work.

Item 5: Any other business

5.1 The difficulty of coordinating messaging between the different pharmacy bodies was noted and the work PSNC is already doing to try to ensure as much unity in messaging as possible across the sector bodies was discussed.