

Briefing 028/23: Summary of our September 2023 Committee Meeting

Community Pharmacy England met in London for a full Committee Meeting on 13th and 14th September 2023.

Committee Members considered urgent matters such as our response to the Government on the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan negotiations (for the £645m), as well as strategic issues such as laying the groundwork for the 2024/25 Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) and beyond. This included reviewing the final Vision for Community Pharmacy report and considering its implications for the development of Community Pharmacy England's strategy which work is now commencing on.

Engaging with Community Pharmacy Owners

Ahead of the September Committee Meeting we ran a series of polls to hear pharmacy owners' views on potential options for funding distribution changes, what other funding asks they think we should put to Government, and what changes would be of most help to reduce the operational pressures on their pharmacies. In a change from the July survey, responses from CCA multiples were gathered separately from those of independents and non-CCA multiples, and all responses were weighted for the number of premises they were responding on behalf of. We heard from over 5,400 premises.

On funding asks for 2024/25, pharmacy owners raised concerns about a variety of funding challenges they are facing. Looking at administrative and regulatory changes that would help, about half spoke of efficiency changes – such as original pack dispensing and changes to supervision – and over a third asked for more discretion to make minor prescription amendments.

We also repeated our questions on pharmacy pressures from our July survey as a way of tracking the situation. Again, it was concerning, but sadly not surprising, to see that community pharmacies remain under significant pressure. This time around workforce costs came out on top as the most pressing issue overall, but our new methodology meant we could also identify from the data that inflation/utility bills were likely to rate higher on non-CCA multiples' and independent pharmacies' lists of concerns.

Key findings can be found in [Briefing 027/23: What pharmacy owners told us in September 2023](#).



The full results were considered by all Committee Members, thinking about what they mean for our current and future priorities, as well as drawing on this valuable information, augmented with feedback from the Regional Representatives and LPCs throughout the meeting. In particular, the results were used to directly inform the Committee's goals for the CPCF after the current arrangements end in March 2024.

Committee Members appreciated the opportunity to review and reflect on the opinions received directly from pharmacy owners, whilst our policy team found the data beneficial in providing further evidence for use in negotiations and influencing work. The Communications and Public Affairs Team has already been using the July poll results in MP briefings and national press comments, and plans to do the same with September's. The latest on pressures were also reported back to the sector in the [Pharmacy Owner Engagement Event](#) held shortly after the September Committee Meeting.

We will continue to innovate and improve our pre-Committee polls, whilst also looking to keep them brief and thematically focused. We will consider adopting new methods that enable us to map pharmacy owners' preferences more clearly. We aim to enable pharmacy owners to engage more actively with the poll results through dashboard-like visualisations.

The Committee is also keen to explore how we can monitor which pharmacy owners are responding (and which are not) going forwards to make sure we're reaching as much of the sector as possible. This may require requesting support from LPCs (also known as Community Pharmacy Locals).

Overview of the full Committee Meeting

The full Committee considered the following topics under the agenda for the September Meeting.

Negotiations on the Recovery Plan

First and foremost, the Committee considered the latest position from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England (NHSE) on the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan negotiations, for the pledged £645m investment in community pharmacy. The Committee had previously identified a number of key issues which had been put to Government and the NHS. They considered the latest position in detail, deciding how they wanted to proceed on each point, and identifying where our priorities should be.

It's clear that we need to ensure that funding is put on the right footing, that we understand the relationship of the new proposals with the current contract, and that the proposition includes a fair structure of payments that work now and in the future. It will also be important to shape how the



new Common Conditions Scheme is marketed to the public and how we monitor and manage delivery against potential demand.

The Committee remains committed to reaching a conclusion quickly so that additional funding can be released as soon as possible. There was a desire to continue to do whatever we can on our side of the negotiations to move fast – including holding additional committee meetings at short notice. .

Preparing for the next CPCF negotiations

The Committee explored potential asks for the 2024/25 CPCF, including those referenced in our pre-Committee Meeting poll and additional ideas offered by poll respondents, as well as further possibilities. They thought how best to pitch these asks to the Government and NHS, and what the priorities would be.

We will be asking for an uplift to the baseline contract sum, higher fees for existing services and an uplift to allowed medicines margin. We are continuing to build our evidence base around economics and value, alternative funding mechanisms, inflationary impacts and margin, to help support all of this. The Committee are thinking strategically about how we can further make our case for investment, warning about the consequences of closures, whilst still positioning the sector as a solution to some intractable NHS challenges.

The independent vision from Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund provides a compelling vote of confidence in the sector and its potential. It will help inform Community Pharmacy England's strategy and be key to how we build the case for the future contractual framework. See more on this below.

Janet Morrison, Chief Executive of Community Pharmacy England, said:

"The current negotiations around the £645m are our most pressing priority, but we are also now ushering in a very important period of longer-term strategic planning. Whilst it is essential that we get the additional funding promised to us flowing through to pharmacies as soon as possible, it is also critical that we start laying foundations for the next CPCF.

The Vision for Community Pharmacy that we commissioned from Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund has now come to fruition and we must now use this to engage with political decision-makers at the highest levels, to frame ambitious goals for our role in primary care and to build an investment case for the sector's future sustainability. Our influencing work will continue to build political commitment to community pharmacy and its future potential well before we enter the negotiation room, where the mandate has already been set by the Treasury."



Strategy development

Initial planning work was undertaken on the development of the Community Pharmacy England Strategy. This project, running from now until March 2024, will need to be an agile and reflective process. A timeline was set out, including further sessions with a working group of Committee Members to help build the process along the way, with the wider Committee due to discuss the detail at their scheduled meetings in November and February.

The Committee reviewed the current capability and performance of Community Pharmacy England, undertaking a discursive 'SWOT' style analysis to help recognise strengths and weaknesses, as well as understanding the opportunities and threats that lie ahead. Committee Members also agreed to reflect once again on its mission, values and objectives as part of the strategy development process – looking at where the organisation could do more and where it could be more efficient.

Having now seen the final Vision for Community Pharmacy report by Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund, just ahead of its publication, the Committee considered the implications of its findings and recommendations as part of shaping our strategy. Committee Members identified what was in scope for Community Pharmacy England and ranked the key themes as high, medium or low priorities. Agreeing a roadmap for the future of community pharmacy with Government and NHS England and developing a framework for the hierarchy and roll-out of clinical services were top of the list.

Independent Economic Review

Outside of the negotiations, a key agenda item for the Committee was analysing NHS England's plan for the independent economic review of the sector that had been promised as part of the CPCF arrangements agreed for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The Committee were presented with the proposals provided by NHS England and then asked to decide whether they wished to support it. In making their decision, they explored the key concerns identified, as well as the potential risks of not participating. Ultimately there was unanimous agreement to participate in the project to seek to shape what will be a complex project.

Governance improvements

Continuing our work to strengthen representation, independent governance expert Victoria Finney talked through the latest stage in the governance review process, including providing the Committee with feedback from LPCs.

Various aspects of a series of proposals designed to improve governance – such as how some of the changes will work in practice – were discussed in detail. The Committee were then able to sign off an



action plan, a governance framework, new code of conduct, scheme of delegation, and principles to guide new governance and advisory structures. They also agreed a process and timings for a future Committee composition review.

Victoria will continue her work with the governance steering group on further development of detailed governance proposals for Community Pharmacy England and is due to return to our November Committee Meeting. The Committee also recognised the importance of supporting LPCs (or Community Pharmacy Locals) to undergo a similar governance review as part of changes to local representation.

Discussions from our Subcommittees

Funding and Contract (FunCon) Subcommittee

FunCon covered a wide-ranging agenda including ongoing reimbursement reforms, exploring proposals for original pack dispensing (OPD), and reviewing DHSC proposals for entry/exit criteria for Category M products. The subcommittee reviewed the recent price concessions webinar and new resources being developed for pharmacy owners.

Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee

CPA met a day later to consider both the outputs of the full Committee Meeting and to oversee our engagement, communications and influencing work. They reviewed the ongoing work to influence Government, considering the public affairs activity plan and a proposal for a joint manifesto for the Save Our Pharmacies Campaign. The subcommittee also reviewed a draft of the 2022/23 annual report for Community Pharmacy England.

LPC and Contractor Support (LCS) Subcommittee

LCS met on 15th September, discussing support for LPCs to continue to help them to make changes at a local level to implement the Review Steering Group (RSG) proposals, up to March 2024. The subcommittee reviewed an interim analysis of LPC-supported Provider Companies in England and discussed the NHS England IP pathfinder programme and associated support for LPCs.

Service Development Subcommittee (SDS) and Legislation and Regulatory Affairs (LRA) Subcommittee

SDS and LRA did not meet on this occasion, having met over the summer.

Agendas and minutes of previous meetings are published on our website: cpe.org.uk/meetings



Next Steps

We held our first national engagement event just a few days after our September Committee Meeting, on the evening of Monday 18th September. The digital gathering was an opportunity for pharmacy owners to participate in discussions on key issues, share views on issues that are important to them and hear more about our work and progress in key areas. The agenda covered important topics such as current pharmacy pressures, an update on negotiations, how we're preparing for the next contractual framework, and the future vision for community pharmacy. Members of our Committee and policy team also fed back to the sector on the Committee Meeting and answered questions. An on-demand recording of the event can be viewed via the link below.

[Pharmacy Owner Engagement Event: an on-demand recording](#)

As always, Community Pharmacy England remains fully focused on finding solutions to the complex challenges facing community pharmacy businesses. We have already begun planning for the next pre-Committee Meeting poll and making preparations for the November meeting agenda. We hope to have concluded negotiations on the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan before then.

If you haven't already done so, we would also recommend that you [learn more about the Vision and Community Pharmacy England's next steps](#), including a number of various resources developed to engage stakeholders under the **#PharmaciesOfTomorrow** hashtag.

If you have any queries or require more information, please contact: comms.team@cpe.org.uk