



Communications & Public Affairs (CPA)

Subcommittee Minutes

Date: Thursday 25th May 2023

Start time: 2:30pm

Location: Zoom meeting

Note: These minutes have been redacted to protect conversations around items of a confidential nature.

Members present: David Broome, Tricia Kennerley (Chair), Fin McCaul, Stephen Thomas.

In attendance: Sharlyn Beltran, Mike Dent, George Foote, Jas Heer, Gordon Hockey, Zoe Long, Melinda Mabbutt, Niamh McMillan, Beran Patel, Sian Retallick, Ian Strachan, Faisal Tuddy, Adeola Wilson.

Apologies: Clare Kerr, Jay Patel, Prakash Patel.

Conflicts of interest: None declared.

Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the meetings held on Thursday 9th February 2023 were approved by the subcommittee.

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

Action 1: Public polling to help build support for Pharmacy First was carried out with media coverage gained, and the Government's GP Access Plan has now been published.

Action 2: The pharmacy organisations have had further conversations about the Save Our Pharmacies campaign and deciding on actions following the Access Plan. Immediate next steps include a final push on the patient petition to reach the 100,000 signatories mark.

Action 3: The Committee considered the draft Communications and Engagement Strategy, alongside the draft messaging matrix for Community Pharmacy England, in March.



Item 1: Subcommittee Workplan

- 1.1 The subcommittee considered the progress on the workplan as agreed by RDF. Progress has been made on all the points that were listed for the first quarter.

ACTION 1: Activity around the recovery plan could be added to the workplan.

- 1.2 Members had a discussion on how best to communicate the outcome of negotiations, (when the time comes), and noted that some external stakeholders have already voiced concerns about the Common Conditions Service which we need to address, e.g. regarding consultation rooms, data confidentiality and AMR.
- 1.3 It was noted that we should focus on rebutting concerns around AMR, as when the Common Conditions Service goes live, there will inevitably be increased scrutiny on pharmacists' professional competency. We should be proactive on this.

ACTION 2: Messaging to be drafted to counter these concerns, working with the other national pharmacy bodies.

Item 2: Communications and Engagement Strategy: Implementation

- 2.1 The Strategy update as set out in the agenda was noted, along with the rebrand launch date of 30th May. The subcommittee noted that there is a risk that further pharmacies could be forced to close whilst waiting for the £645m funding to feed through to the sector and questioned what more we could do to show people that we are monitoring the pressures they are experiencing.
- 2.2 The pre-Committee polling may help with this and the subcommittee considered what themes or questions we should ask pharmacy owners about ahead of the July Community Pharmacy England meeting.
- 2.3 Members noted that we need to continue to build evidence demonstrating how pressurised the sector is currently. The situation is getting worse and worse and the impact on businesses needs to be captured.
- 2.4 Questions we could put to pharmacy owners may include:
- What difficulties are you experiencing around financing your business?
 - Have you been asked to provide a guarantor or are you having discussions with your bank, or have they refused you further loans?
 - Are you providing services such as the NHS blood pressure check and if not why not: what are the barriers?

- Are you relying more or less on locums now?
- Have you already seen any increase in demand for self-care or support with minor ailments?

2.5 It was agreed that we will need the results of the polling in time for the Committee Meeting and that the aim will be to make this process proactive and constructive.

ACTION 3: Sector polls to launch in good time ahead of the July committee meeting.

2.6 It was noted that we need to try to set realistic expectations about the future, and also show the sector what we are asking Government for – this had landed well when we shared the list of regulatory changes that we had asked for, and this approach could be taken in our annual report e.g. sharing our asks on HRT, concessions, etc. We should also do more to explain what is happening in the negotiations, if we can.

ACTION 4: CPA to continue to monitor progress on delivery of the strategy and all committee members to share any ideas for comms with the team.

Item 3: Public Affairs: Planning after the Primary Care Access Plan

- 3.1 The subcommittee reflected on our current messaging and all the work that is currently taking place. Messages should focus on current pressures, workforce issues, and the access plan including wider concerns with it.
- 3.2 It was noted that nuanced messaging is required. On the one hand, we want to be supportive of the Common Conditions Service and the associated investment in community pharmacy, but on the other hand, the sector remains under extreme pressure. The sector is on its knees, yet we can do more with more funding: this is a difficult message to communicate.
- 3.3 ZL confirmed that as well as engaging shadow health teams, we are also engaging with Government MPs. The subcommittee felt we needed to continue to influence policy makers across all political parties.
- 3.4 It was noted that severe issues with medicines stock remain. We could utilise Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund to try and feed into manifestos ahead of the General Election and to raise more awareness of these issues.
- 3.5 It was suggested that respective pharmacy bodies can meet to discuss the Save Our Pharmacies campaign over the summer with the view to relaunch it in the autumn, in the lead-up to party conferences. The subcommittee were keen that the campaign continue, in partnership with the other national bodies.



ACTION 5: Team to update our messaging and develop a workplan for the coming months to get across our key messages including on pressures and medicines supply.

Item 4: Annual Report 2022/23

- 4.1 It was noted that we need to ensure the annual report is engaging, useful and informative for our audience. This could include accompanying animations to help ensure this is not just lost as another piece of collateral. We could also launch to the pharmacy press.

ACTION 6: Plan for the annual report to be developed taking into account the feedback from the subcommittee and the need to ensure it is widely read.

Item 5: Pharmacy Communications and Media Work

- 5.1 The subcommittee noted the paper in the agenda.

Item 6: Parliamentary Engagement and Public Affairs

- 6.1 The subcommittee noted the report paper and GF noted the ongoing work to raise the profile of the crisis in the pharmacy sector across Parliament.
- 6.2 Members asked about the recent Halton, St Helens and Knowsley roundtable, a summary of which was included in the report paper. It was suggested that we need to encourage more of these type of sessions as this is a good way to get our messages across.
1. It was noted that we need to continue to be more direct in our messaging when talking to pharmacy owners. The cultural rebrand should help to build on the progress already made on this.

Item 7: AOB

- 7.1 It was agreed that CPA should next meet shortly after the full committee meeting in July.

ACTION 7: Next CPA meeting to be booked in for after the July meeting.