

Briefing 026/24: Summary of November 2024 Committee Meeting

Community Pharmacy England met in London for a full Committee Meeting on 20th and 21st November 2024. Committee discussions focused on key topics such as the implications of the Government's Autumn Budget plans, and the current status of negotiations – including revisiting priorities for the 2024/25 Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) and scenario planning. This included agreeing to write to Ministers urging them to provide immediate funding relief to community pharmacies and insisting on the recommencement of CPCF negotiations.

The NHS 10-Year Health Plan was also reviewed during the meeting, with discussions on key points and messaging for our response on behalf of the sector. The Committee discussed developments relating to the Pharmacy First service, reviewed results of the latest polling of the sector gathered ahead of the meeting, and heard from PA Consulting on findings from the Comprehensive Spending Review project. Committee Members also reviewed and agreed on workplans and priorities for the upcoming year.

Overview of the full Committee Meeting

The full Committee considered the following topics at the November meeting.

CPCF negotiations

Committee members were united in their anger about the ongoing delay to CPCF negotiations, and in their view that community pharmacy needs an urgent funding injection to prevent collapse. Reflecting the Committee's intense anger and frustration in the delays, Community Pharmacy England has written to Ministers about this following the Committee meeting.

CPCF negotiations have remained paused since the General Election. While the timing of negotiations is ultimately decided by Government, the Committee had hoped for information from the Department and NHS England on when negotiations might restart, but the timing is still unclear. While this reflects the wider pressures on Government at the moment, and likely ongoing departmental discussions following the Budget announcement to balance the competing demands from public services, it is extremely frustrating given how crippling the current underfunding is for pharmacy owners.

The Committee also revisited red lines and priorities in preparation for the upcoming negotiations, to guide the Negotiating Team's approach.

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

“We are now eight months into the 2024/25 financial year with no financial settlement in sight: this is disastrous from a business planning perspective, falls short of proper economic regulation, and the continuation of current underfunding is proving catastrophic for community pharmacies.

“I have written to Ministers once again to warn them that with every day that passes, more community pharmacies are falling into debt and administration. Many community pharmacy owners are now considering whether to close, sell or make further cuts to staff and patient services before they collapse. Our regular sector polling has shown how the pressures are already affecting patients, and that is going to worsen.

“We implore Government to recommence negotiations very soon and will update the sector as soon as we have news.”

Budget implications

The Committee reviewed the [impact of the Budget on community pharmacy](#) considering analysis of how the plans could further affect the sector’s financial stability. For example, the National Living Wage increase will cost the sector an additional £115–£152 million annually from April 2025. Changes to Employers National Insurance contributions are estimated to add at least £50 million in costs. And the reduction in the rate of business rates relief will add costs for affected pharmacy businesses.

Community Pharmacy England has [already written to the Minister and Secretary of State](#) outlining this budget impact analysis, including in a [joint letter with other pharmacy organisations](#), as well as briefing MPs and the national media. A [briefing note](#) is available for any LPCs or pharmacy owners want to brief local Parliamentarians on the Budget implications.

Update on engagement with Government

An update was provided on our ongoing engagement with the new Government to ensure community pharmacy remains a key priority. Chief Executive Janet Morrison reflected on her first [meeting with Minister for Care Stephen Kinnock in September](#) at which she and Committee Members had outlined the pressures facing community pharmacies. Janet noted the Minister’s clear support for the sector, which was reflected in his comments at the [Labour Party Conference](#) about how vital community pharmacy is. The Minister had also recently given a video message to the [LPC Conference](#) in which he highlighted the Government’s commitment to prioritising pharmacy and fully supporting the Community Pharmacy First service. Janet also noted her meeting with the Minister on the day of the [Autumn Budget](#) announcement, when she set out concerns about cost implications for pharmacies.



2024/25 Spending Review Project update – PA Consulting

Representatives from PA Consulting provided an update on the extensive economic project they are undertaking on behalf of Community Pharmacy England. The project sets out the value of the sector, exploring how community pharmacy can support the Government's goals, provided the sector is properly funded.

PA Consulting have made an economic case highlighting how much value for money community pharmacies can deliver to the Government and for taxpayers. They have also made a commercial case, showing how addressing the funding deficit and redesigning the contractual framework are critical to creating a more sustainable future for pharmacies.

Community Pharmacy England will be commencing discussions with DHSC and NHS England on this work imminently, ahead of the next Spending Review, with further plans for Parliamentary and other work linked to it in the New Year.

NHS 10-Year Health Plan

At the time of the meeting, Community Pharmacy England was preparing to submit an organisational response to the Government as it develops the NHS 10-Year Health Plan for England. Pharmacy owners and their teams had been [invited to our NHS Plan webinars](#) to learn how they could get involved and how we were preparing to respond on behalf of the sector.

Committee discussions focused on how community pharmacies can help to deliver on the Government's three key shifts: helping to shift care from hospitals to communities, improve early illness detection and prevention of ill health, and use technology to help in improving primary care.

Community Pharmacy England has now [submitted a response](#) based on the [Vision for Community Pharmacy](#), economic priorities, and service prioritisation, as well as a joint response with other primary care negotiators.

Pharmacy First update

The Committee received an update on Pharmacy First. By the end of September 2024, 96.9% of pharmacies (10,143) had opted into the service, with over 1.2 million clinical pathway consultations submitted for payment. The Committee also noted that NHS England relaunched its public-facing Pharmacy First campaign in November, with minor updates to the original materials, including additional information on the age criteria for the clinical pathways. The campaign now involves advertisements on radio, music streaming platforms, and online media websites such as YouTube.



Community Pharmacy England and Healthwatch England have also launched an [online Pharmacy First patient survey](#). This survey allows pharmacy owners to ask patients to provide feedback on their experience with the service. The results will inform service improvements, contribute to the national evaluation of Pharmacy First, and be shared with NHS England and DHSC. The findings will also support Community Pharmacy England's work to show the value of the service to the public.

To help pharmacy teams promote the survey, resources such as posters and flyers have been made available, and a national summary of the survey results will be shared on the Community Pharmacy England website.

Tactics and Outlook

The Committee revisited its key priorities and the approach to working with Government to get the best outcomes for community pharmacy. It reflected on the wide-ranging views of the sector, including the results of the recent ballot by the National Pharmacy Association, but also on the absolute agreement on the urgent need for further funding and support for pharmacies.

In writing to Ministers after the meeting, Community Pharmacy England underlined once again that the sector is at breaking point, and cannot continue to operate under current funding constraints.

Engaging with Pharmacy Owners

Ahead of the November Committee Meeting, sector polling gathered views from pharmacy owners on the challenges they face this winter and as usual, on financial and operational pressures. More than 3,500 pharmacy premises were represented in the poll results, which are now being used in national media work and will be shared once that work has been completed.

- **Feedback:** The poll included a section for open feedback, and comments received mostly related to well-known issues and concerns. Main themes included financial strain, business sustainability issues, staffing challenges, morale and frustration with Government lack of progress on negotiations.
- **Pressures tracker:** Workforce costs were reported as the most significant pressure facing pharmacy owners with unpredictable revenue streams being the second most intense pressure on pharmacy businesses.

The full polling results were reviewed by Committee Members and used to inform discussions on influencing Government, refining work plans, and setting priorities and next steps. This feedback, particularly the pressures tracker, continues to help guide how we press for change through our communications and public affairs plans.



Discussions from Governance Subcommittees

Audit and Risk (A&R) Subcommittee

The subcommittee approved management accounts covering the first half of the year. The projected year-end figures were reviewed and a first discussion held on a draft Budget for 2025/26.

Developments to internal procedures around the year end accounts were approved. Levy collections and committee member expenses were reviewed as usual.

Governance and People (G&P) Subcommittee

The Chair reported that the selection of two 10+ (non-CCA) Multiple contractors as observers to the committee was progressing well and there had been expressions of interest from 15 of the 6,710+ Multiple pharmacy businesses in England. The process of shortlisting candidates for interview had been carried out, and the interviews should be concluded by the end of November. He said that there had been efforts to conclude the process in time for selected candidates to attend the current (November) meeting as observers, but this had not been practicable. The two observers should be appointed before the end of the year and be able to attend Committee meetings once appointed.

Work is also progressing on the longer-term and wider related issues on Committee composition.

Updates from Advisory and Policy Subcommittees

Funding and Contract (FunCon) Subcommittee

The subcommittee received updates on a variety of critical issues including progress on the Independent Economic Review of the sector, the impact of branded generic prescribing on the distribution of pharmacy funding, the ongoing effects of supply issues and the concession system on pharmacy owners, and the status of margin delivery and the margin survey of independent pharmacies.

LPC and Contractor Support (LCS) Subcommittee

[The Annual Conference of LPCs and Community Pharmacy England](#) held on Thursday 7th November focused on crucial considerations for the coming year, including inputting into the NHS 10-Year Health Plan and working with the new Government. The event was attended by delegates representing 52 out of the 54 LPCs.

The LPC 'soapbox' session gave LPCs a platform to raise the issues that are important to them. Branded generics, medicines margin and unfunded consultations were top of LPCs' collective concerns.

For the first time, the conference was followed by a stakeholder reception, with LPCs joined by representatives from think tanks, health charities, and patient groups. Opening remarks were made by



Chief Executive of The King's Fund, Sarah Woolnough, and Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research at Healthwatch England, William Pett.

Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee

The Chair reported on some of the key communications and public affairs work that had been taking place throughout the autumn including:

- The publication of the [2023/24 annual report](#) for Community Pharmacy England.
- National media work which has covered the final results of the [Pressures Survey](#), the [Advice Audit](#) and funding pressures, including [following the Autumn Budget](#).
- [The Labour Party Conference event](#) with Minister Kinnock, the new APPG Chair and The King's Fund all on the panel with our CEO Janet Morrison. The event was well attended, and it was good to hear the Minister publicly recognising the shocking rate of pharmacy closures.

Work is ongoing to highlight the very critical funding pressures and prepare for further Parliamentary events and national media work in the New Year.

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

Next Steps

The key priorities for Community Pharmacy England remain to address the urgent CPCF funding crisis and to make the case for the long-term sustainable future of community pharmacy. We will continue to build on the relationships with Ministers and to work, including through the national media, to ensure that community pharmacy's needs and value are clearly understood, as well as the risks of inaction.

We have written to Ministers urging them to provide immediate funding relief to community pharmacies and insisting on the recommencement of CPCF negotiations. This is critical to ensure the sector's sustainability and to prevent a potential house of cards style collapse.

Chief Executive's Video Blog

Community Pharmacy England CEO Janet Morrison has also given a video update to the sector, covering the prolonged delay in CPCF negotiations. Janet outlines the long term work that Community Pharmacy England has been doing to turn the dial in community pharmacy's favour.

[Watch the CEO video blog](#)

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

“While we have made progress, such as working with PA Consulting on our negotiation strategy, publishing the Vision Report, Advice Audit and three key reports from our Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2024 data, the sector still faces significant financial challenges. Ensuring sustainable funding is now more urgent than ever.

“Following this meeting the immediate steps have included contacting the Minister and Health Secretary again to apply pressure on these critical issues and to push for CPCF negotiations to resume as soon as possible.”

Resources for LPCs and pharmacy owners

As part of ongoing Parliamentary influencing work, we have published updated guidance for LPCs and pharmacy owners to support engagement with their local MPs over the winter period.

[Guidance for writing to your MP](#)

This briefing sets out guidance for writing to local MPs. Personal letters and emails are more powerful than a template letter, so we have deliberately produced this guidance rather than writing a template letter.

[General MP visit guidance](#)

This extensive guidance aims to help with pharmacy visits or meetings with politicians. It also includes template invite letters, follow up actions and a draft local press release.

[Recent MP briefings](#)

We have produced a number of MP briefings since the start of the current Parliament. The latest briefing is our Autumn Budget 2024 briefing note. These briefings can be attached to email correspondence or given to MPs at an in-person pharmacy visit.

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