



Communications & Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee Minutes

Date: Friday 9th February 2024

Start time: 12:30pm

Location: Zoom meeting

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

Members present: Tricia Kennerley (Chair), David Broome, Fin McCaul, Stephen Thomas, Jay Patel (had to leave c. 1.40pm).

In attendance: Janet Morrison (CEO), Zoe Long, Mike Dent, Sue Killen, Melinda Mabbutt, Sharlyn Beltran, Adeola Wilson.

Apologies: Clare Kerr, Prakash Patel.

Conflicts of interest: none declared.

Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 23rd November 2023 were approved by the Subcommittee, subject to one correction to reflect that David Broome is a Subcommittee member.

Matters arising: There were no matters arising.

ACTION 1: Post-committee communications went live following the November meeting, and a summary of January's meeting has also now been published.

ACTION 2-4: Updates on these were covered in the agenda papers.

ACTION 5: Briefings on funding and National Living Wage have been produced, with letters going to Ministers and national press coverage secured.

ACTION 6: Plans are in development with all pharmacy bodies – AIM, CCA, NPA and RPS – to be invited to take part in the Parliamentary drop-in event on Pharmacy First. The Subcommittee discussed the approach to joint working as set out below.



Item 1: Subcommittee Workplan

- 1.1 The Subcommittee noted the progress on the workplan, and the chair thanked the team for the large amount of ongoing work as indicated in the Subcommittee papers.

Item 2: Outputs from Committee Meeting: Messaging and Actions

- 2.1 The Subcommittee discussed the rising frustration in the sector as pressures continue including funding and margin challenges, Pharmacy First and wider workload, and workforce pressures. Some are also concerned about the composition of Community Pharmacy England's Committee. This is all combining to increase the levels of anger being directed at Community Pharmacy England.
- 2.2 Regional Representatives fed back that Community Pharmacy England is perceived by some pharmacy owners to be uncaring and isolated from the sector. The progress made through the engagement strategy was noted, but the Subcommittee should continue to look for ways to address the strength of this feeling.
- 2.3 In particular, we need to be on the front foot of explaining what the available funding really means and being realistic about it – we need to continue to brief journalists and politicians that the additional £645m funding is not enough to resolve all our problems and have rebuttal lines ready where Government are referring to the £645m.
- 2.4 The Subcommittee agreed that it is difficult to get across how hard we are still fighting for more funding, while also being realistic about the dire situation out there and not setting unrealistic expectations for the future. Different ways of engaging with pharmacy owners were considered and the Subcommittee will continue to look at this topic.
- 2.5 There was a suggestion that we could warn about the possible impact of closures – the potential for pharmacy deserts – and the Subcommittee agreed that we must continue to find new ways to highlight the pressures and the impact they are having. This might include seeking data on bank defaults, late payments, and other factors. We could also do a comparator with General Practice, comparing their funding with ours and continuing to remind people that unlike them, we do not receive funding to cover our staffing, rent payments, etc.



- 2.6 We also need to engage the full sector in our influencing work with further letter-writing and other resources, and could look to Pharmacist Support to provide a public offering for struggling pharmacy owners – this would also help to highlight some of the issues.

ACTION 1: Team to plan next national engagement event to try to tackle some of the sector engagement issues – Committee Members to continue to feed in ideas about how best to do this.

ACTION 2: Public affairs work to look at using GP comparator and rebuttals to help make our case, and to focus on involving the sector in influencing MPs, Government and the NHS.

Item 4: Projects Update

- 4.1 AW gave an update on tracking of engagement with the 2022/23 annual report. Learnings for the future include continuing to provide easy to digest content such as animations and infographics alongside the full report.
- 4.2 The questions for this year's Pharmacy Pressures Survey are being updated, and Committee Members were asked to share any additional topics or questions that they feel would be useful to include.
- 4.3 Sentiment tracking on the rebrand will take place over the summer as we pass the first anniversary of the rebrand.

ACTION 4: Finalise the 2024 Pharmacy Pressures Survey and prepare for launch in March.

ACTION 5: Conduct sentiment tracking on the new branding via polling during the summer Committee polling.

Item 5: Pharmacy Communications and Engagement

- 5.1 The report was noted.
- 5.2 A verbal update was provided on the progress of NHS England's PR campaign for Pharmacy First. There remains some concern that some of the adverts may not be setting the right tone: robust feedback on this has already been provided to NHS England.



Item 6: Public Affairs and Influencing

- 6.1 The reported was noted.
- 6.2 The Chair commented that the increasing amount of media coverage is thanks to the hard work of the Comms Team and CEO.

Item 7: Any other business

- 7.1 None.