

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Pharmacy
Tuesday 1st November, 15:00 – 16:00
AGM & How Local Pharmacies Can Help – November Briefing Session

Speakers Panel:

- Janet Morrison OBE, Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee
- Malcolm Harrison, Chief Executive of The Company Chemists’ Association
- Thorrun Govind, Chair of the Royal Pharmacy Society’s (RPS) English Pharmacy Board
- Sanjeev Panesar, National Pharmacy Association Board Member, and Pharmacist Superintendent and Owner of the Pan Pharmacy Group
- Sandeep Dhani, Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies member and Superintendent at MW Phillips Chemist

Parliamentary Attendees:

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| • Janet Daby MP (acting Chair) | • Sir Peter Bottomley MP |
| • Derek Thomas MP | • Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP |
| • Sir George Howarth MP | • Danny Kruger MP |
| • Baroness Meacher | • Kate Green MP |
| • Lord Clement-Jones | • Baroness Golding |
| • Ian Paisley MP | • Kirsten Oswald MP |
| • Caroline Nokes MP | • Sir Stephen Timms MP |
| • Peter Dowd MP | • Office of Philip Davies MP |
| • Mary Robinson MP | |

Meeting Notes for AGM

Introduction from Chair

Janet Daby MP introduced the meeting on behalf of Taiwo Owatemi MP.

She explained there would be a short AGM and then a briefing session with short speeches from industry representatives before a Q&A for parliamentarians.

Election of Officers

It was agreed by way of a vote that Taiwo Owatemi MP would become Chair of the APPG.

It was agreed the following parliamentarians would be elected or re-elected to the Committee:

Taiwo Owatemi MP	Labour	Chair
Derek Thomas MP	Conservative	Vice-Chair
Sir George Howarth MP	Labour	Vice-Chair
Peter Dowd MP	Labour	Vice-Chair
Baroness Meacher	Crossbencher	Vice-Chair
Lord Clement-Jones	Liberal Democrat	Vice-Chair
Elliot Colburn MP	Conservative	Officer
Paul Bristow MP	Conservative	Officer
Julian Sturdy MP	Conservative	Officer
Baroness Cumberlege	Conservative	Officer

Approval of income and expenditure statement

Acting on behalf of the Secretariat, Tendo Consulting gave an update on the income and expenditure of the APPG. This was approved.

Briefing Session

Introduction from Chair

Janet Daby MP introduced the expert panel of speakers who provided an overview of how local pharmacies can play a bigger role in primary care, help address the NHS backlog and tackle winter pressures, and the support they need in order to do so.

Sandeep Dhani, Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies member and Superintendent at MW Phillips Chemist

- Mr Dhani highlighted the ways in which pharmacies contribute to healthcare including administering COVID and flu vaccine programmes.
- He discussed the current pressures pharmacies are facing including financial strain, recruitment issues, drug supply issues, and the impact of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.
- He said pharmacies want to do more for the NHS and are capable of delivering more but they need help from the Government to move forward.

Thorrun Govind, Chair of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's English Pharmacy Board

- Ms Govind spoke about the potential for pharmacies to take on a greater role in primary care and highlighted the benefits of having more pharmacist independent prescribers.
- She discussed the merits of the Pharmacy First scheme in Scotland and how a similar scheme in England would relieve pressure on GPs and better manage demand across primary care.
- There was a need for a long-term pharmacy plan to provide more stability for the pharmacy sector amidst current challenges.

Malcolm Harrison, Chief Executive of The Company Chemists' Association

- Mr Harrison described how pharmacies were also facing pressure from changing healthcare needs and increasing NHS demands. Including how pressure in general practice was creating more demand for pharmacy services.
- He outlined a shortfall in pharmacists and how despite a desire for pharmacists to help even more patients, current pressures were limiting their capacity to expand their clinical role.
- He called for a long-term plan for the workforce to ensure that resources are directed where they deliver the most benefit to patients but also a roadmap for how pharmacists' clinical skills are best utilised in the future.

Janet Morrison OBE, Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee

- Ms Morrison said that overall funding had declined in real terms since 2017. Pharmacies were not being paid for the informal consultations they carry out. She told the APPG that 84% of current spending is on staffing costs (compared to 53% in 2010). The impact of cost-of-living increases on pharmacy was also discussed, including how pharmacy was having to absorb significant additional pressure. The result was temporary and permanent closures as pharmacies struggle with costs, she said.
- She said a properly funded Pharmacy First scheme, like in Scotland and Wales, had been proposed and although Ministers had shown they were keen for such a scheme, crucially it needed funding.
- She outlined the ways pharmacy can do more for patients, such as independent prescribing, managing long-term conditions, and medicines optimisation, but emphasised they need the capacity.
- PSNC had commissioned Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund to develop a new vision and strategic options for community pharmacy, and invited MPs to engage with this work.

Sanjeev Panesar, National Pharmacy Association Board Member, and Pharmacist Superintendent and Owner of the Pan Pharmacy Group

- Mr Panesar also spoke about the funding and workforce challenges facing pharmacies. He told the APPG that the unique qualities of pharmacy offering regular face to face interaction with patients provided an opportunity for things like lifestyle interventions.
- He said the accessibility of pharmacies, expert advice and vital services had been highlighted during the pandemic. This highlighted a number of ways pharmacies can contribute even more to healthcare, including helping to clear the NHS backlogs, administering more vaccines and improving public health.
- He described a vision for pharmacy in which the sector was viewed as the front door to the NHS and a place to receive same day medical support. He also praised the Pharmacy First scheme in Scotland and Wales and said political will to make better use of independent prescribers was needed.
- Concluding his remarks, he described pharmacies as an untapped and overlooked resource that provided cost-effective solutions to ongoing issues in healthcare. More investment was needed but by unleashing the potential of pharmacies, patients will immediately see the benefit.

Discussion

Following the opening remarks parliamentarians discussed how the APPG might support by seeking to invite ministers to meetings, engage with shadow health teams and further highlight the testimony of the speakers.

Questions

Sir George Howarth MP spoke about utilising pharmacies for minor ailments and the number of consultations they are already carrying out informally. He said pharmacies can take enormous pressure off GPs and A&E Departments by doing what they do best. He suggested using statistics to show Ministers the case for better utilising pharmacies.

In response, **Sandeep Dhimi** highlighted the difference between working in pharmacies in Wales, where pharmacies can provide a minor ailments scheme linked to GPs, and in England where they cannot.

Baroness Meacher spoke of the issues in general practice and said pharmacies present the one real solution. She asked whether enough pharmacists were being trained/retained.

Mary Robinson MP said that the Pharmacy First scheme was an obvious solution and that the concept of visiting a pharmacist as a first port of call was not new but appeared to have been lost. She also asked how much of the issues in pharmacy were down to having a sufficiently trained workforce.

Danny Kruger MP said that as Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Prescribed Drug Dependence he was interested in the role of pharmacies in managing repeat prescriptions and withdrawal services.

In response to the questions about training, **Malcolm Harrison** highlighted the changes to independent prescribing and said it was good but could go further. He clarified there were now more pharmacists than ever, with some new schools whilst others had closed, but that demands were now higher, so more pharmacists were needed. He also highlighted that many pharmacies were dispensing at a loss.

Janet Morrison said that PSNC had put forward a Pharmacy First proposal but, with pharmacies facing a 25% real term drop in funding since 2017, they cannot do it without the funding. She said there was a sense that it had been accepted that pharmacies were already providing informal consultations for free but emphasised that without resources they cannot offer clinical services at the scale or scope that is needed.

In response to Danny Kruger's question regarding prescribed drug dependency, **Janet Morrison** highlighted the role pharmacies were already playing medical optimisation including discharge medication work and medicines management.

Thorrun Govind added that pharmacists were trained to have the necessary clinical skills to do more for patients but are not given the opportunity to use them. They were often frustrated, and many were leaving community pharmacies for other settings such as general practice to use their clinical skills.

In response to Danny Kruger's question about prescribed drug dependency, **Thorrun Govind** added that pharmacists routinely carried out medicine use reviews and often flag issues to GPs.

Peter Dowd MP asked about the relationship between pharmacies and general practice and how it can be improved.

Lord Clement-Jones said whilst the situation regarding closures was depressing, there was hope in the fact that the success of Pharmacy First schemes in Scotland and Wales provided a model for England to follow. He also spoke about cooperation between general practice and pharmacy. He described pharmacy as a "Cinderella" service and said it was taking pressure off the wider NHS.

Derek Thomas MP spoke about the issues regarding funding and said that independent pharmacies were being particularly impacted by the financial issues. He suggested engagement with Ministers to show that previous warnings about the situation with pharmacy funding had not been heeded.

In response to questions about engagement with general practice, **Janet Morrison** confirmed conversations between the two sectors were happening. Quoting Amanda Doyle, Director of Primary

and Community Care, she said the NHS were starting to understand to role of pharmacies, but that proper support was needed.

Thorrun Govind also confirmed that recent discussions she had had with the Royal College of General Practitioners showed they wanted to work with pharmacies on these issues.

Referring back to **Danny Kruger's** question on drug dependency, **Malcolm Harrison** said pharmacies were offering services that help people manage long term conditions and come off medications. He also highlighted the success of the Pharmacy First pilot in Cornwall.

Closing Remarks

As acting chair, Janet Daby MP thanked the speakers for their interventions and reiterated the commitment by the APPG Pharmacy to follow-up with Ministers and continue to raise these issues in the House.

The meeting was then concluded.