

NORTH OF TYNE LOCAL PHARMACEUTICAL COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

– COMPLETED BY KEITH KENDALL - CHAIR

The twelve months to the end of March 2020 have been like no other twelve months for community pharmacies represented by North of Tyne LPC and across the country. Not only because of the coronavirus pandemic, but also for the announcement in July last year of the new 5-year deal for the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) after what has been described as treading water for years. At the end of March 2020 the number of pharmacies within the North of Tyne LPC area reduced by 3% to 184 pharmacies.

The announcement of the £2.592bn per year for the CPCF at least brought some certainty for the future in terms of funding. The amount was not as high as many contractors would have wanted but was, as described by our negotiating body the PSNC, 'a significant increase on the Government's planned funding level'. The announcement saw the phasing out of MURs and the Establishment Payment, the announcement of transitional payments in recognition of costs associated with changes such as integrating with PCNs, preparation for SSPs and implementation of the FMD. The QPS was adapted and renamed as the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS). These are just some of the changes outlined in the joint CPCF Agreement Document, with clarity on many points following on from that announcement.

The North East of England as a whole and the community pharmacies and their teams within North of Tyne have been crucial in the success of the pilot services that resulted in the introduction of the Community Pharmacy Consultation Service (CPCS) in October 2019. The overwhelmingly positive response by our contractors to the opportunity to register for the CPCS was staggering (98%) and demonstrated the recognition of this service being critical to securing the expanded role for community pharmacy. The LPC ran well attended and received events in September and October to support contractors and their teams with the introduction of CPCS and with the other significant changes brought by the CPCF. A further CPCS evening event was carried out in February this year following up on the launch of the service.

The flu season saw community pharmacy in this area play a significant part in vaccinating the public. The challenge facing us this coming season is significantly greater and will undoubtedly need greater co-operation between professions to achieve the vaccination levels required to protect the designated cohorts. Our role in covid vaccination is not yet clear, but we fully expect community pharmacy to once again play an important part.

The winter saw the national focus on Brexit move to the general election while Brexit remained inextricably linked, and then eventually the UK's actual withdrawal from the EU. The focus of attention was soon to be replaced by the current pandemic and the unprecedented changes brought on by Covid-19.

The response to the pandemic by community pharmacies has been outstanding with those pharmacies in North of Tyne stepping up to meet the needs of their customers, 'keeping their doors open' and demonstrating the vital part that pharmacies and their teams play as part of the NHS family. In the early stages of the pandemic covered by this annual review the LPC received large volumes of requests for information and guidance on PPE, changes to duration of prescribing, the national guidance being produced, and how locally commissioned services were affected. The LPC, and in particular Head of Services and Support Ann Gunning and newly appointed Chief Officer Geraint Morris committed themselves to keeping pharmacies up to date without unnecessarily duplicating communications from other parts such as NHSE/I and PSNC. The potential impact on funding from locally commissioned services was addressed early and resulted in successfully negotiating income protection for those locally commissioned services as they became under potential threat near the end of March. **Over the full year of this report the LPC was able to ensure that no services were lost.** The LPC has also continued to support contractors to maximise their income and profitability from existing services.

Locally commissioned services within the North of Tyne (NoT) area are:

- PSNE commissioned – Think Pharmacy First (across NoT), Specialist drugs (NoT), SharpEnd (Northumberland), Plan B (Newcastle), supervised consumption (Newcastle & North Tyneside), needle exchange (Newcastle), Hepatitis C screening (Newcastle), Blood Pressure screening (Newcastle)
- North Tyneside Local Authority – Stop smoking
- Northumberland Local Authority – Stop smoking
- Northumbria Healthcare Trust – Plan B (North Tyneside & Northumberland)

Over the year, as well as retaining existing local services the LPC has concentrated on supporting contractors with maximising the other funding that has been available to them. The Quality Payments Scheme (QPS) became the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS) and has remained an important area of focus, with the LPC helping pharmacies understand the differences in the new scheme, and the urgent timescales that applied to parts of the scheme. Support for Healthy Living Pharmacies has also continued not least through the Locality HLP meetings.

In October 2019 we held our annual Community Pharmacy Awards. This is a means of recognising the teams and individuals working locally in Community Pharmacy who had delivered great patient centred care and high-quality pharmacy services over the previous year. We were delighted to be joined by Rachel Wilkins from Healthwatch Newcastle to present the awards and let us know a little more about how the three Healthwatch bodies for our LPC provide a vital link to patients.

This LPC along with Gateshead and South Tyneside and Durham LPC's have continued to work on maintaining and growing services for our contractors through the separate provider arm company, Pharmacy Services North East (PSNE). PSNE has grown during the year with Community Pharmacy Cumbria (AKA Cumbria LPC) formally joining the provider company. The company tenders for contracts for pharmacy services both at a local level, and across a wider footprint. Additional services commissioned recently include North Tyneside, Newcastle and South Tyneside substance misuse services, Newcastle Stop Smoking Service and a South Tyneside micro-spirometry service. All income above running costs are returned to the respective LPCs. This income is reflected in the LPC accounts and provides LPC funding in addition to the levy to support contractors.

The committee reviews and plans how it make best use of the funding provided through the levy to contractors. At the March 2020 LPC meeting the committee agreed to reduce the contractor levy by 50% with effect from 1st May 2020. The committee was able to make this decision after the CPCF announcement gave some future financial and contractual certainty, and after having made the fixed term appointments for the roles that were agreed as needed to best support contractors regarding Health Living Pharmacies and Primary Care Networks. The LPC has now been able to put its plans into action to actively support contractors with PCNs. PCN leads were agreed by contractors and Carolyn Jackson has joined the LPC in a part time capacity as PCN Support Lead in recognition of the number of PCNs we cover and the need to support these roles and the pharmacies within the PCNs effectively.

The elected officers of the LPC, the Chair, Vice-chair and Treasurer are elected annually. The committee took the pragmatic decision as the pandemic started to take a firm hold to delay these elections for 6 months and to carry out the elections in September 2020. This continuity has helped the LPC to maintain support contractors, and to adapt to the circumstances including remote working, as have so many organisations and businesses.

North of Tyne LPC continues to benefit from strong representation from committee members, both independent and multiple who welcome feedback on any issues that contractors would like to be raised with the committee. Contractors or their representatives are able to attend LPC meeting as a non-voting observer, and this has continued to happen over the last year. Our previous plans to create greater opportunities for contractors or their representatives to directly engage with the LPC have been revisited after being put on hold for obvious pandemic reasons. Our intention is to create virtual opportunities for the LPC to listen to insights and respond to questions from pharmacies.

This year has also brought the Wright Review, which was commissioned by PSNC and LPCs to review community pharmacy representation. The LPC has been actively engaged with the process led by Professor Wright of UEA and held

an additional LPC meeting in February to provide the LPCs formal response. The recommendations of the review were delayed due to the pandemic but have now been published on 19th June 2020. Changes have yet to be agreed, and the coming year will start to see agreement and steps toward the agreed changes take shape.

Although we have a 5-year national contractual framework in place there is still much that needs to be negotiated by PSNC for the remaining years. As your LPC we remain committed to supporting our community pharmacy contractors and their teams to adapt to the changes that will come. We will support the community pharmacy PCN leads, and through them the pharmacies within each PCN aims to build the collaborative working relationship locally that is needed. The LPC will be representing you, leading and supporting across North of Tyne and we look forward to continuing working with you over the next 12 months, adapting as we all are to the current situation. As we do this we will be keeping an eye clearly on the future to achieve what will be significant transformational change for community pharmacy.

Finally my thanks go to Paul Conroy our former Chief Officer who left us in February this year, Geraint Morris who then joined us as Chief Officer, our LPC Executive committee, LPC team and the LPC committee members, who have all worked with tremendous dedication to support pharmacy contractors and their teams through what has been a hugely challenging time.

Keith Kendall MRPharmS

Chairman North of Tyne LPC
