

All-Party Pharmacy Group (APPG)

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Dear Sir/Madam,

APPG Primary and Community care Inquiry: *How can service improvements be achieved and where does pharmacy fit?*

Introduction

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacies in Great Britain. It is our role to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public who use pharmacy services in England, Scotland and Wales.

Our core statutory functions include:

- setting the standards of education and training which pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must meet in order to join our register and to remain registered throughout their professional life
- registering pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and setting the standards of conduct and performance which they must meet to stay on our register
- setting standards which must be met by the owners of registered pharmacies and the pharmacists who act as superintendents in company-owned pharmacies
- registering pharmacies which meet those standards and inspecting them to check that they continue to do so, as the services they provide and the environment within which they operate constantly change
- taking action when our standards are not met – typically through Fitness to Practise (FtP) proceedings and enforcement action

Summary points

Statements from governments across Great Britain have highlighted the need for pharmacy to play an ever more prominent role in health and social care, identifying its potential to alleviate the growing pressures on other parts of the NHS, including primary care. This would require the effective utilisation of the skills and capabilities of the entire pharmacy team. The pharmacy team needs to be adequately educated, trained and supported to respond to the needs of patients and the public, now and in the future.

New models of care and new ways of working are already emerging, although it is not yet clear the pace of these changes and what their long term impact will be. Through our pharmacy inspections we have found many excellent examples of inter-professional working and patient-centred care, with pharmacies fully aware of and reflecting the needs of their local communities.

We are also working to ensure that our standards for pharmacy professionals, which we will be consulting on in early 2016, embed the centrality of patient-centred professionalism, multi-professional working and high quality care.

Submission to the inquiry

The GPhC welcomes the opportunity to respond to the All-Party Pharmacy Group inquiry into primary and community care.

Policy background

In recent years there has been a lot of discussion, led by governments and key stakeholders in health and social care, about how to respond to the growing challenges of an ageing population, multimorbidity and tightening NHS finances. Ministers have specifically focused on developing the full potential of pharmacy in order to meet these challenges and alleviate the burden on primary care. This has been reflected (in England) through the NHS Five Year Forward View, which focuses on introducing new models of primary care and bringing care away from hospitals and closer to people's homes and communities.

The changing pharmacy landscape

We are already seeing evidence of closer working between pharmacists and other healthcare professionals. As part of our outcome-focused inspections we are increasingly looking for, and able to identify, examples of good practice. We have seen pharmacies adapting their services to the needs of their local communities, for example by providing sexual health advice and substance misuse services, among others. We have seen a growing focus on patient-centred care and numerous examples of confident, clinically-attuned pharmacists who have regular contact with GPs and nurses and follow-up on patient cases by providing thorough consultation.

As ever, the key will be for governments, working with pharmacy leadership bodies and others, to identify ways in which positive innovation and change can be shared and adopted throughout the sector.

The challenges of the future

If the provision of pharmacy services is to support the desire to increasingly move care out of traditional settings, then further change may be needed. As the pharmacy regulator, we recognise that there are some areas where the changes required will mean we need to revisit our standards for initial education and training, and for pharmacy professionals. This is to ensure that they remain up to date in a world where integration across settings and working between clinicians and clinical teams is commonplace (in primary as well as in secondary care), and where further integration means better working between pharmacy, local authorities and social care providers.

Government funding to support the employment of pharmacists in GP practices across England, and the broadening access of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to patient electronic records is one area where we can see an increase in joint working. However, these changes also present certain manageable risks, which need to be handled appropriately.

The challenges for the GPhC

Our position as the regulator for both pharmacy professionals and registered pharmacies (whether in communities, in health centres, certain hospitals or online) means we have a key role to play in ensuring that patients and the public receive the quality and standards of care that they can expect. We need to be responsive to changes in the way pharmacy services are delivered and need to make sure that the pharmacy team have the skills and training necessary to fulfil their increasing responsibilities in delivering primary care services in the future.

What the GPhC is doing

In order to address these challenging expectations and respond to the demands for change, the GPhC is committed to listening to our registrants, patients and the public, as well as to working with governments, the NHS and other employers. We have to make sure that our standards are fit not just for today, but for a future in which the health and care sector in England, Scotland and Wales will require more of pharmacy professionals.

We recognise that the fast-changing nature of healthcare in general, and pharmacy in particular, require a review of our professional, education and pharmacy standards and guidance. In particular, it is crucial that our standards for education and training reflect all of the above-mentioned changes and prepare tomorrow's pharmacy team for new roles, new challenges and increased patient expectations.

The review of our standards for education and training

We listened and reflected on feedback received in response to our discussion paper *Tomorrow's pharmacy team* (responses were collected between June and August 2015) and from attendees to our Education conference in November 2015. We saw almost two hundred delegates from across the UK, representing pharmacy professionals, patients, governments, education and training providers, employers and students, coming together to consider the future of pharmacy education and training. There was widespread agreement from delegates at the conference that the core skills of professionalism, communication skills and multi-professional working need to be included in the standards for all members of the pharmacy team. And many of those attending told us that the pharmacy team need more interaction with patients in clinical settings and more inter-professional learning during their education and training.

What we have learnt from the conference and the responses to the discussion paper will help us draft the standards for the initial education and training of the pharmacy team. This work will begin next year and will be followed by public consultation and publication in 2017.

Our dialogue on professionalism and the review of our standards for pharmacy professionals

We believe that enabling and encouraging pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to act professionally, in the best interests of patients, provides the best protection for patients and encourages quality in pharmacy. The environment in which they work must support and enable a culture of patient-centred professionalism. We are therefore working to embed patient-centred professionalism in all of the standards which pharmacy professionals and pharmacies are required to meet.

We have begun a review of the core standards for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians with a national conversation with the public and pharmacy professionals about what they would expect from a pharmacy professional who was patient-centred and acting professionally. We have heard from a wide range of people and organisations and the outcome of this conversation will inform the development of the new standards for pharmacy professionals, which will be published next year, following a public consultation.

Other work priorities for the GPhC

We are also making significant changes to how we regulate pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, by developing a framework to provide assurance to the public that pharmacy professionals continue to meet the standards for safe and effective practice throughout the course of their careers.

Our work to overhaul the way we inspect registered pharmacies is another example of how we are working to make sure that patients and the public receive high quality care. We continue to review the operation of our inspection model to ensure it is proportionate, patient-centred and focused on outcomes.

We hope the information provided above will be useful for the All-Party Pharmacy Group's inquiry and are happy to provide any further information and to contribute to future discussions about pharmacy and primary care in Great Britain.

Yours faithfully,



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