

Brexit: Looking ahead to 2021 and beyond

While uncertainty remains about the future relationship between the UK and the EU, the RPS is looking ahead to 2021 and the future for the pharmacy profession.

Protecting patient care, supporting the pharmacy workforce, and ensuring the continuity of medicines supply will continue to be high priorities for 2021. We expect to see the UK Government taking action in these areas and will offer our support in moving this important work forward.

To date, we have sought and received assurances that the UK Government, devolved governments, the pharmaceutical industry and other key stakeholders have plans in place to sustain the supply of medicines following the Brexit transition period. We have been reassured that in the immediate weeks following transition, continuity of medicines should be maintained. Plans for buffering stocks of medicines, supporting readiness for new customs and border processes, and preparing enhanced freight and logistical arrangements provide us with confidence that there should be a smooth transition in the New Year.

Whilst we will continue to monitor the situation in the short-term, our focus for 2021 will be on the medium to long-term plans for pharmaceutical care. Sustaining and strengthening the medicines supply chain will continue to be a high priority for next year. We will continue to call for changes to legislation to allow community pharmacists to make minor changes to prescriptions to enable the safe and effective supply of medicines to patients where there are routine medicines shortages. We will also continue to raise with Government our concerns about a possible influx of counterfeit medicines. The need to prioritise the patient safety benefits of an anti-counterfeiting system in a way that is flexible and in line with medicine supply systems will remain on our agenda.

Minimising price hikes in medicines will also be important. The MHRA has noted that in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit "the extra costs of complying with a new UK regulator could be passed on to the purchaser through higher prices of medicines".¹ We will continue to advocate that any additional regulatory burden should be avoided to ensure the UK remains an attractive market for new and innovative medicines.

It will also be critical that Great Britain remains attractive to a highly skilled health and science workforce. Ensuring the health and life sciences sectors can remain welcoming and attractive to the world's best talent will be firmly on our advocacy to-do list.

Other key areas that will continue to be a concern for the RPS in 2021 and beyond include, securing the role of the UK research sector, maintaining mutual recognition of qualifications within the European Union, and sustaining participation in EU wide clinical trials.

We fully recognise that the work does not stop when the Brexit transition period ends. In 2021 RPS will continue to connect with the UK Government, devolved governments and key stakeholders to ensure the voice of the pharmacy profession is heard as we lay the solid foundations for the future of pharmacy and healthcare outside of the European Union.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2019/118/pdfs/ukia_20190118_en.pdf, p. 3