

Building Bridges and Influencing Change

A lobbying guide for pharmacists



Contents

- Section 1: Why should we be influencing?
- Section 2: Lobbying at-a-glance guide
- Section 3: The four steps to influencing
- Section 4: Promoting the role of pharmacy
- Section 5: National Assembly for Wales Election 2016
- Section 6: Checklist for successful lobbying and influencing

- Appendices: Templates - Letters and Press Releases

Section 1: Why should we be influencing?

Effective influencing and lobbying is achieved through a coordinated approach of activity and targeted messages, aimed at a network of pre identified stakeholders.

The RPS Welsh Pharmacy Board has a remit from its members to promote the status of the pharmacy profession and ensure that pharmacy's voice is heard by government, the media and the public via consultation documents, formal committees and groups, in private meetings with ministers, politicians and civil servants.

In some situations where actions by government impact upon pharmacy, a united response from our members' proves invaluable to the Society and highly persuasive to government. In these instances, the most powerful campaigning tool available to the members of the RPS is our members.

This guide, produced by RPS Wales, is a resource to assist those who wish to campaign for change. It will help to promote and support lobbying activity by local pharmacists and Local Practice Forums. Through lobbying, members can highlight and raise awareness of key issues, such as the development of advanced services, and seek to influence decision-makers and opinion formers in their own constituencies, regions and nationally. Local lobbying activity can help members to build relationships and influence with local Assembly Members (AM) and Members of Parliament (MP), and spur them into action on behalf of the pharmacy profession.

This guide is intended to provide material and practical guidance to enable members to take part in lobbying and influencing activity but also provide more detailed guidance for engagement with politicians and electoral candidates ahead the 2016 National Assembly for Wales election.

Section 2: Lobbying at-a-glance guide

Decide an approach

The first thing to do in any campaign is to identify your issue. This could be anything from promoting the role of pharmacists to opinion-formers, to expressing concerns over a specific issue. This may be something you would want to do by yourself or with others. Remember – there is strength in numbers and the more colleagues and supporters you can enlist to your cause, the better. It is, however, important to remember that any campaign should reflect your roles and responsibilities as a health professional. If you are lobbying as part of a RPS Local Practice Forum, you need to ensure that you reflect the policies of the RPS. Help and advice is available from the Welsh Directorate of RPS.

Get writing

Draft a campaign letter, highlighting your issue, and asking for a meeting or written reply- see letter/ invitation template at the appendices.

Organise an event

Holding an event can help draw attention to your cause and need not cost much money. This guide provides further suggestion about setting the themes for an event, recommendations on venues and the kind of people you might wish to invite.

Use local media & social media

The local press and radio may be interested in your lobbying and engagement activity, particularly if you are organising an event. See draft press release.

Social media such Twitter and Facebook can also play an important role in effective influencing and lobbying. Twitter and other social media channels have become very powerful ways of influencing and engaging with politicians and a wide range of stakeholders.

Section 3: The four steps to influencing

Step 1: The issue

Asking yourself “What’s up?” is the starting point. You may have met your MP, AM and local councillors at local events or functions and taken the opportunity to raise issues of concern. The difference between this kind of casual contact and lobbying is that lobbying is a targeted and planned activity, with the aim of raising a particular issue and bringing influence to bear on the way that it is viewed and, ultimately, the way that it is resolved.

Before you start, it will be important to identify existing lines of communication such as the Welsh Pharmacy Board, LPF, Community Pharmacy Wales, and other pharmacy organisations. A co-ordinated approach is best wherever possible, although there can be strength in bringing different perspectives to bear on a given issue.

Issues could include:

- Getting across the profession’s views on the government’s health policies
 - A particular issue of concern, for example, access to patient records, independent prescribing or the NHS IT network
 - Promoting good practice, or showcasing innovation in pharmacy practice locally
 - A local issue that is affected by a development in health or social care policy
 - Concerns over workforce and service capacity
-
- ✓ [Shape your message](#) - when you have decided what issue you want to raise, you then need to think carefully about how best to put your views across. This is known as shaping your message. It is important to think about the perspective of the person you want to influence and to try to speak to their agenda.
 - ✓ [Be constructive](#) - effective lobbying is about presenting solutions as well as problems. It is important that you avoid the appearance of being motivated out of self-interest, so you should emphasise that you are speaking as a health professional with the public interest at heart.
 - ✓ [Put your case forward](#) - The meeting with your AM/MPs should be business-like and they will expect a case to be put to them, outlining the issue, the effect it will have upon pharmacy and the public and why they should become involved. You may wish to refer to the Welsh Pharmacy Board’s Policy Vision for the 2016 Welsh Election to help you put forward specific issues around the key calls to action.

Step 2: The audience - who to contact?

When you have identified the issue you want to raise, you then need to consider who you want to communicate with. In many instances, you will want to contact a combination of local decision-makers and influencers. However, you will need to prioritise. If you want to raise a local health issue, the Local Health Board may be the obvious choice. If you want to get across your views about national government policies, your AM & MP will be an important local contact.

i) Assembly Members and Members of Parliament

In Wales, health is a devolved matter for the Welsh Government and AMs can be more influential than MPs on health issues. AMs can either represent a constituency or a region – you will therefore have one constituency AM and four regional AMs who represent you in the National Assembly. Which AMs to target will depend on the issue and the AMs areas of interest. RPS Wales are able to advise you on these issues and can help you target appropriate AMs and Assembly candidates to support your cause.

AMs will usually be required to be in the Senedd from Tuesday to Thursday each week, with both the National Assembly and Westminster Parliament having respective recesses roughly coinciding with school holidays. AMs tend to spend Mondays and Fridays in their constituency or regions giving them a chance to have meetings with their staff, attend local events and hold surgeries for constituents. MPs tend only to be in their constituencies on a Friday. Many AMs and MPs also make themselves available over the weekend for events, meetings and surgeries. Both AMs and MPs receive hundreds of letters, telephone calls, e-mails and invitations every week. Therefore, it is important that you are clear about the issue you are raising in order to grab their attention.

Whilst most AMs have offices in their constituency / region and Cardiff Bay, MPs also tend to have both a constituency and Westminster Office.

Many pharmacists will know their local AM/MP and some will have made contact previously. In Wales, you can find out who your AM is at: <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1> or through the Welsh Office of RPS. If you do not know who your local MP is, the easiest way to find out is to use the MP “locate” service on the Parliament web-site at: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/commons/>. This service also links to contact details and biographical information about MPs.

Contact with your AM/MP can be through correspondence or in person. Correspondence is the best method of contact if you wish to maintain a process that can be tracked. Making contact with the AM/MP in person is an effective way of building a good relationship and encouraging them to take up the issues you want to raise. However, it is important to make contact in a way that is timely and organised.

The sample letter (**See Appendix I**) provides a template with which to write to your AM/MP to request a visit to gain an understanding of the services you provide including any advanced services on offer. Alternatively, a short meeting, or surgery appointment could be organised.

The RPS Wales Office can provide assistance in making contact with your AM/MP.

ii) Local healthcare bodies

There is a range of local health bodies, representing providers and users of services which members may want to engage with as part of a programme of lobbying activity, either to raise the profile of the profession, or highlight a specific issue.

iii) Third party endorsement

A truly effective campaign will have the backing of other stakeholders: patients, the general public, other health professions and healthcare providers. In Wales, the patient voice is supplied through Community Health Councils and voluntary groups and their support will add weight and influence to your message.

iv) The local media

The local media can be a key part of your local lobbying activity. For example, if you are meeting with your local AM/MP, you may want to invite local press to send journalists and photographers. This has the benefit of being an added incentive for people to participate in the event, and giving local publicity to our profession. You should also make your own arrangements for a photograph which can then be emailed to local media, the pharmacy sector media such as the PJ, C&D, or the Welsh Pharmacy Board newsletter and used in your own materials such as on your website and social media platforms.

A media dimension to the event can also be a helpful way of shaping the ongoing activity and encourage the AM/MP to engage in the issues. If, for example, the AM/MP is participating in a media interview, he/she will want to sound knowledgeable and interested in the issues relating to pharmacy and will need to say how he/she intends to take up the issues.

In planning media contact, you need to identify all possible outlets for your story from mainstream local papers to the trade and free press, and radio and TV stations. Remember, no outlet is too small: often the free newspapers circulated in residential areas are more widely read than national daily newspapers.

It is important to involve, and where appropriate, give prior notice to people you are involving in media activity. For example, your AM/MP may be able to supply contact information for the local media outlets, or will be prepared to issue a press release to support your cause.

The RPS Wales office can help you to engage with the media and support the development of a press release for publication after the event.

Step 3: Set clear objectives

Lobbying activity is an important opportunity to secure action and continuing support from AMs and MPs. You should prepare in advance a list of ways in which you want him/her to help you and then try to get their commitment.

i) Raising an issue with your AM/MP:

When raising issues with your AM/MP, you should aim to win his/her commitment to one or more of the following actions, prioritised according to the type of issue you are raising:

- Writing to local decision-makers such as the council or LHB
- Attending a further meeting, or event, with you
- Writing to the Minister for Health and Social Services in Wales to highlight the issues you have raised
- Accompanying you on a visit to a pharmacy to observe a practice development or witness an issue
- Tabling an Assembly Question to be asked in the plenary sessions of the National Assembly.

The RPS Wales Office will be able to provide you with additional guidance on these points, as well as a further briefing information outlining the issues that you may wish to raise.

ii) Raising an issue with your local health bodies:

If you have involved other local health professionals or representatives of health bodies in your campaign, the specific ways in which you could ask them to help include:

- An invitation to attend, or make a submission to an appropriate meeting, or committee of a relevant local healthcare body
- A commitment to continuing dialogue and consultation with you
- To raise the issue that you have highlighted with other key influencers or decision-makers

Step 4: Review and develop activity

Once you have embarked upon lobbying activities, it is important to take stock and review how successful it has been and how you can build on this activity. The contacts you have made can become a long term “network of influence” that you can use to reinforce your current campaign and to use with future issues that you wish to lobby on.

For follow up contact activity to be successful, you should refresh your messages and style. For example, a local AM/MP is likely to be more receptive to your request for a meeting if you suggest that you are keen to update him/her, and to thank them for their efforts.

Contact the RPS Wales office for further assistance when following up on your activity.

Section 4: Promoting the role of pharmacy

For many stakeholders this may be their first impression of how a pharmacy operates internally and will allow them to experience first-hand how a pharmacy functions on a day to day basis. The visit will give key opinion formers the opportunity to experience the contribution pharmacy makes to the healthcare of people in Wales.

Points to consider

Confidentiality – Patient confidentiality must be considered at all times. When demonstrating processes within the pharmacy e.g. labelling it is advisable to set up a fictitious patient on PMR, prescriptions within the dispensary should have the patient's details covered, consultation rooms should be free of patient identifiable material.

Health and safety – having additional people in the working environment must be considered, including any impact on staff and patient safety caused by disruption of the dispensing process.

First impressions count – Take a quick look around with fresh eyes and ensure the working environment gives a professional impression.

Key messages about Pharmacy

Pharmacists are experts in medicines: Pharmacists are the experts in medicines, providing information and advice to patients, colleagues and fellow professionals. They support patients in ensuring that they manage their medicine appropriately helping to reduce the incidence of adverse drug reactions.

The pharmacy network: Pharmacists work at the heart of healthcare in Wales, using their unique understanding of medicines for the benefit of people in their local communities and in hospitals. Pharmacists also work in the pharmaceutical industry, helping create and deliver the medicines of tomorrow – and in academia, developing pharmacists of the future. As a vibrant, cross boundary profession, pharmacy acts as a network of support for patients as they access care in varying settings.

Pharmacy and the public health agenda: Pharmacists are ideally placed to enable and provide patients with strategies to help themselves in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles or managing their chronic disease. Pharmacists already provide advice on a daily basis to ensure that patients who are able and willing to treat themselves can *self-treat* and *self-medicate* for *minor ailments*. Access to medication required for self-care through minor ailment treatment schemes increase opportunities for self-care.

Pharmacies provide access to a health professional without an appointment: Community pharmacy is easily accessible with up to half of the population living within 500 metres of a pharmacy. Pharmacies are found where people live, work and shop, providing help and advice usually without the need for an appointment and are often open when other healthcare professionals are not.

Standards and Public Safety: All pharmacists must be registered with the GPhC and must practice in accordance with the GPhC Code of Ethics and professional standards guidelines. Pharmacy is a graduate profession with pharmacists registering after undergoing a four year degree course and a one year pre-registration training. Inspectors routinely visit Community Pharmacies to provide pharmacists with support in their practice and to ensure professional standards are observed.

Pharmacy an evolving profession: Independent prescribing status for pharmacists will further develop the professions ability to support patients, allowing pharmacists to prescribe for patients in hospital and community settings, providing flexibility and improved access to services. Additionally, in Primary care Clusters, new clinical pharmacy roles will support the development of innovative multidisciplinary services across Wales.

Section 5: National Assembly for Wales Election 2016

The RPS Welsh Pharmacy Board has produced its own policy vision for the next term of the National Assembly for Wales entitled *Steps to Better Health and Wellbeing*. It has also undertaken a lobbying campaign with the political parties in an effort to influence their policy development for their manifesto pledges.

Steps to Better Health and Wellbeing calls for the political parties in Wales to commit to:

- Establishing a pharmacy-led Welsh Chronic Medication Services
- Permitting pharmacist access to individual health records
- Fully integrating pharmacist expertise into NHS multidisciplinary teams

To support our policy vision we have produced this guide highlighting how members and LPFs can get involved through a nationally co-ordinated campaign, raising awareness of what pharmacy can provide to patients, by utilising the strength of its members to demonstrate that pharmacists are the experts in medicines and are ready to take on new services that will benefit the Welsh population.

We are inviting our members to participate in the campaign to demonstrate to AMs and MPs exactly what pharmacy can deliver for patients and how it is one of the most untapped resources in the delivery of healthcare in Wales.

Continuing guidance and support can be given from the RPS Wales Office once you have embarked upon a campaign, so please join in and help make a real difference to pharmacy and for pharmacists.

A summary of Steps to Better Health and Wellbeing can be found at **Appendix 7**.

A full version in both Welsh and English is available at:

<http://www.rpharms.com/wales-activity/rps-wales-policy-vision.asp>

Section 6: Checklist for successful lobbying and influencing

- ✓ Contact the RPS Wales Office for an initial discussion about lobbying activity and developing a campaign. We can also forward relevant biographies of candidates, information about the relevant party manifesto's, and the RPS Wales Policy Vision.
- ✓ Write an email or letter to your AM/MP/electoral candidate inviting them to a premises to see pharmacy practice in action. **See Appendix 1 and 2.** Remember to signpost to the RPS Wales Policy Vision within your email by inserting a link to the policy vision web page:
(<http://www.rpharms.com/wales-activity/rps-wales-policy-vision.asp>)
- ✓ If the AM/MP/electoral candidate accept, arrange a date, and confirm the date/time and nature of the visit via fax/email/post. Remember to include location details. **See Appendix 3.**
- ✓ Contact your local press to inform them that AM/MP/candidate is visiting your pharmacy on the said date. Remember to tell them:
 - Who's visiting
 - The time they'll be visiting
 - Why they are visiting
 - What you and your colleagues hope to highlight during the visit
 - Ask if they have a photographer interested in coming along
 - Inform them that a press release will be issued following the visit
- ✓ Contact your candidate the morning/afternoon prior to the visit to double check arrangements.
- ✓ Ensure that your pharmacy team are well briefed on:
 - The candidate attending
 - The RPS Wales Policy Vision
 - Any local issues relating to pharmacy
- ✓ During the visit, ensure that the AM/MP/electoral candidate:
 - Has an opportunity to meet staff
 - Has an opportunity to discuss the RPS Wales Policy Vision
 - Has an opportunity to ask you questions!
- ✓ Before the candidate leaves the pharmacy, ensure that you have taken a photograph yourself if the local press haven't sent a photographer.
- ✓ Following the visit, tailor the thank you letter (**see Appendix 6**) and remember to include a copy of the photograph for his/her information/use.

- ✓ Tailor the press release (see Appendix 4 and 5) and issue it along with the photograph to the local press.
- ✓ Remember to keep the RPS Wales office informed of the visit and any key issues that have been discussed.

***Remember, the RPS Wales team is available to all RPS Members to provide you with support and advice at all steps in the lobbying and influencing process.**

Appendices: Templates - Letters and Press Releases

Appendix I

Invitation letter

[Name of your MP] or *[Name of your AM]*
House of Commons National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
London Cardiff Bay / Bae Caerdydd
Cardiff Cardiff / Caerdydd
SW1A 0AA CF99 1NA

[Date]

[Salutation should be handwritten]

Advanced services in pharmacy

As a pharmacist working in your constituency, I am writing to highlight the work currently being carried out at *[name]* pharmacy and to invite you to visit us.

As you will be aware, the pharmacy profession has seen great change over the last few years. Pharmacists have been given increasing responsibility in the provision of patient-facing clinical care. We now offer a range of public health focused services designed to provide the public with the facilities to monitor their own wellbeing and support for the management of chronic conditions outside hospital. We are working hard to deliver these services and are in turn building vital capacity into the NHS at the front line.

[Add more information about advanced services here]

I would like to invite you to visit the *[name of your pharmacy]*, so that you can experience first-hand how the pharmacy profession has adapted and innovated in order to meet the needs of your constituents. Your support would obviously be invaluable in promoting new developments in delivering front-line healthcare to a local audience.

I will also be taking the opportunity to invite members of the local and trade press to the event, which I hope will provide a useful opportunity for a photo-call for you in your local community.

I look forward to welcoming you to *[name]* pharmacy.

Yours sincerely

[Name]
MRPharmS

Election Campaign Invitation Letter

[Name of your AM]
National Assembly for Wales / Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Cardiff Bay / Bae Caerdydd
Cardiff / Caerdydd
CF99 1NA

or Candidate Address
(contact RPS Wales
Office)

[Date]

[Salutation should be handwritten]

Dear XXXXXXXXXXXX,

I write to you as a member of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) to invite you to my pharmacy during the election campaign period to discuss the contribution pharmacy makes to healthcare services in your area.

I understand that you are standing as the [insert party name] candidate for the constituency of XXxinsert consitutency nameXXXX on 6 May 2016 and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the range of healthcare services we provide to patients and the potential contribution that pharmacy has to offer to the wider NHS. As the experts in medicines, pharmacists all over Wales are providing essential health services, advice and support to the population through a range of local services tailored to patient needs.

RPS Wales has issued our Policy Vision for Wales in the run up to the 2016 Welsh Election, highlighting the fact that pharmacists make a unique expert contribution to Welsh healthcare services. I have included a copy of this for your information. The visit will provide you with an opportunity to speak to our pharmacy team and colleagues and to ask any question you may have about the services that we provide.

We intend to inform the local press should you wish to accept this invitation to visit my pharmacy, and look forward to hearing from you and confirming arrangements in the near future. Please contact me on XXXX or at XXXXXX@XXXXXXX.

Yours sincerely

XXXXXXXXXX

Pharmacist
Member of the RPS

Confirmation Letter

XXXXXXXXXX

Date

Dear Name

I'm writing to confirm the arrangements for your visit to the local pharmacy of

Name of pharmacy, address including postcode, date and time of visit.

Names of those attending will be present during the visit to answer any questions you may have.

During the visit, we hope to inform you of the work of pharmacy in Wales with particular emphasis on the work and contribution of our team to your constituency.

The visit will be informal and will last no longer than one hour.

Please contact me for further details on the pharmacy's location.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on phone number or email@email

Yours sincerely

Your name and contact details

Press Release

Local AM/MP, NAME, had his/her blood pressure taken today during a visit to NAME pharmacy, ADDRESS.

AM/MPs NAME visited the pharmacy and met pharmacist, YOUR NAME, to discuss the growing number of services available from pharmacies, previously only available from a GP's surgery. These services are expected to include: smoking cessation, obesity management, prescribing repeat prescriptions and managing long-term conditions such as diabetes.

AM/MPs NAME commented: "I'm pleased to have visited my local pharmacy and received the all-clear on my BLOOD PRESSURE TEST. I'm impressed that these services are now available within the community at a time convenient to patients. I'm also pleased this initiative will help free up GP's, allowing them to deal with those cases that may need more of their time. This is a huge step forward in the standard of care available to the public."

The new service is available from NAME pharmacy after NAME Local Health Board ...

Election Campaign Press Release

Date

Time of release

[Candidate name] visits [name of pharmacy] pharmacy in [location]

[Candidate name], [party name] candidate for the constituency of [constituency] for the Assembly Election on the 6 May 2016 has been finding out how patients in the constituency are gaining from access to pharmacy services and the support of the pharmacy team in [community name].

During a visit to [pharmacy name], [community name], on [date], [she/he] saw for [herself/himself] how community pharmacists and patients will benefit from the advances in pharmacy in recent times.

[Pharmacist name], the community pharmacist said: "Pharmacists provide a crucial service to communities throughout Wales, and an understanding of their role in the arena of healthcare professionals is crucial. Here in our pharmacy, we are providing the community of [community] with services to ensure patients can access quality advice and care without an appointment."

Ends

For further information please contact the Welsh Office of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, on 029 20 730310

Notes to Editor:

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society is the professional body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. The Welsh Office implements Society policy in Wales.

Thank You letter

Dear XXXXXXX

I'm writing to thank you for attending XXXXXXXXXXXX Pharmacy on the XXXX 2011. I hope that the meeting provided you with an overview of pharmacy's contribution to healthcare in your constituency.

I was pleased that the meeting presented an opportunity to discuss current issues pertinent to pharmacy and its contribution to the wider NHS in Wales.

I hope you found the meeting both enjoyable and informative, in particular pharmacists' eagerness to ensure quality contribution to the delivery of a first class healthcare service in Wales. We would welcome the opportunity of co-operating with you again.

I have enclosed some follow up material for your information regarding the matters discussed on the day including a copy of the press release we have issued to the local press and a photograph for your records. If you require any additional information on pharmacy matters, please contact the Welsh Office of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society on 02929730310/wales@rpharms.com.

Yours sincerely

Executive Summary of Welsh Pharmacy Board's policy vision:

Steps to Better Health and wellbeing Royal Pharmaceutical Society – Policy Vision for Wales

Unlocking the potential of the pharmacy team

Pharmacists have a positive vision of their contribution to improving health and wellbeing in Wales¹. As the third largest health professional group after Doctors and Nurses, the pharmacy profession offers significant opportunities to increase access for patients to pharmaceutical care. The pharmacy team offers the skill mix to tackle a number of the challenges facing the NHS in Wales. It has the potential to take responsibility for patient caseloads to help alleviate the pressures on GP services, to triage medicines related emergencies, provide unscheduled care, and safely coordinate people's medicines as they migrate through the health and social care system. This potential has not been fully harnessed and innovation is now needed to modernize the model of pharmacy delivery in Wales to ensure patients and the public have access to the full range of benefits that the pharmacy team are already well equipped to deliver. Opportunities to change practice and refine models of NHS care have yet to be taken.

Steps needed to embed the pharmacy team into patient care

The Welsh Pharmacy Board **call for commitment** in Wales to increase patient access to health and wellbeing services by:

- Establishing a pharmacy-led Welsh Chronic Medication Service
- Permitting pharmacy access to individual health records
- Fully integrating pharmacist expertise into NHS Multidisciplinary Teams

Establishing a pharmacy-led Welsh Chronic Medication Service

Medicines are a critical component in the management of all chronic conditions such as diabetes. With projections indicating a significant increase in chronic conditions in the future, coupled with an ageing population, medicines management of chronic conditions will be an essential aspect of NHS care. Chronic conditions place considerable pressures on primary and community care but also impact on acute hospital care through emergency admissions and readmissions (the revolving door

¹ Your Care, Your Medicines: Pharmacy at the heart of patient-centred care (2014): Available at:

<http://www.rpharms.com/wales-pdfs/YourCareYourMedicines.pdf>

Royal Pharmaceutical Society Wales Lobbying Guide
September 2015

of healthcare). It is estimated that one in twenty hospital admissions occur as a result of problems with medication and many of these involve people living with chronic conditions.

Improving the medicines management of chronic conditions is imperative to ensure patients can benefit from high quality care. A pharmacy-led Welsh Chronic Medication Service would allow people with chronic conditions to benefit from structured support, advice and a review of their medicines from a pharmacist. As part of a shared arrangement with the GP and pharmacist, the patient would benefit from an agreed chronic medication plan.

A pharmacy-led Chronic Medication Service in Wales could improve health outcomes for patients, reduce pressures on GP services and ensure NHS resources are utilised effectively and appropriately. For instance, the service could reduce medicines-related admissions to hospitals and help people to live as independently as possible in their own communities.

Routine access to individual patient records and the incorporation of prescribing are essential aspects to enable this service to be delivered in Wales.

Permitting pharmacy access to individual health records

Access to real time patient information is critical to the delivery of safe and effective health care. Yet this is currently denied to the pharmacy profession working in the community, limiting the ability of the profession to make the best possible clinical decisions for patients and restricting the potential for meaningful dialogue with patients and their GPs about their medicines and their health condition.

Access to accurate patient information is vitally important when patients migrate through the health and social care system and when prescribing decisions are made or reviewed as patients move between care settings; on admission to hospital, on discharge from hospital and when taking residency in care home settings. Current strategies to improve this include the Discharge Medicines Review Service which helps to ensure accurate and legible medication records are made available to the right health professional at the right time. Innovations such as this must continue to be supported and further developed to reduce medication related errors, improve appropriate prescribing and to enhance the quality and safety of the patient experience.

Fully integrating pharmacist expertise into NHS Multidisciplinary Teams

As the health profession specifically trained in medicines, pharmacists have a vital role to play in the multidisciplinary care team, ensuring patients are supported to get the best from their medicines.

Since 2004 the Welsh Government has invested annually in the training of pharmacist prescribers. There are now around 130 fully trained pharmacist independent prescribers, offering the potential to work in close collaboration with GPs and other health professionals in emerging primary care arrangements and in other environments where care is delivered including acute settings, care homes and prison environments.

To date those skills are not fully harnessed into models of care in Wales and opportunities to share patient caseloads and build capacity in the healthcare system are being missed. Pharmacists can be trained as prescribers within a six month period due to their current clinical knowledge. This offers opportunities for rapid development of the skill mix of health teams across the NHS, particularly in primary care where the GP recruitment crisis is causing significant concerns.

With the current shortage of GP² and nurse³ practitioners, pharmacists are ideally placed to support their fellow professionals, ensuring the NHS is making the most effective use of all skills and resources⁴ as stated in the principles of the prudent healthcare agenda. Joint workforce planning will ultimately help to ensure an improved quality of care for patients.

The benefits of a fully engaged pharmacy workforce

We believe that a fully integrated pharmacy team will contribute positively to patient care by:

Building capacity in the NHS:

- Pharmacists will provide routine expert advice on medicines and pharmacy services as part of multidisciplinary teams
- Utilising the skills of pharmacists in models of care will free up appointments in primary care by supporting patients with their treatment following diagnosis by their GP.
- Sharing the ongoing management of people with chronic conditions between GPs and pharmacists will reduce demands on GPs and their capacity to focus on complex caseloads
- Patients will have improved access to the right health professional, avoiding delays in treatment

Making every patient contact count:

- The pharmacy team will be the gateway to lifestyle advice, medicines coaching, health counselling and structured reviews of medicines.
- Community pharmacists will identify the early signs of health problems particularly changes in behaviour among vulnerable patients and will signpost people to appropriate third sector services for advice and support, as well as advising people to seek advice from their GP.
- Through confidential consultations the profession will help people to become active partners in their self-care and experts in the use of their own medicines.

Improving medicines safety:

- Pharmacists will routinely ensure the benefits of medicines are maximised in all care settings.
- Through routine reviews of medicines, pharmacists will advise health professionals and patients when a medicine is no longer clinically appropriate and should be stopped (de-prescribing).
- Pharmacists will advise on de-prescribing and switching to more appropriate medicines to improve patient care and medicines safety and also to help reduce waste and over-prescribing.

Increasing access to prescribers:

- Qualified pharmacist prescribers will provide patients with in-depth knowledge of their medicines and will adjust, prescribe and advise on medication regimes, ensuring patients can get the best from their medicines at all times.
- Utilising the prescribing skills of pharmacists will help build capacity in the NHS, freeing up GP workloads for routine patient care, and help to support the ongoing medication needs of patients, particularly people with chronic conditions who need regular clinical reviews and are time intensive for GPs.

² Pulse, 1st August 2014: <http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/your-practice/practice-topics/employment/practices-offered-400k-emergency-fund-to-ease-gp-shortage/20006729.article>

³ Nursing Times, 26th November 2013: <http://www.nursingtimes.net/nursing-practice/specialisms/practice-nursing/new-gp-inspector-warns-of-nurse-shortage-in-primary-care/5065823.article>

⁴ www.prudenthealthcare.org.uk

- Utilising the skills of pharmacist prescribers will help reduce medication related admissions to hospital, enhance the shift of care into the community and support hospitals to manage unavoidable and planned admissions.

Shifting care closer to people's homes:

- Pharmacists will provide lifestyle advice to help prevent illness, maintain good health, and in doing so tackling some of the most pressing public health challenges facing Wales including smoking, substance misuse and obesity.
- Pharmacists will help to educate the public about appropriate use of NHS resources, building upon national schemes such as the Choose Well campaign
- Pharmacy-led medicines triage in hospital emergency departments will help prevent admissions to hospital and help keep people safe in their own community.
- Ensuring every hospital clinical team includes a pharmacist will help to reduce average length of stay and help to facilitate timely discharge from hospital into the community, contributing towards efforts to close the projected funding gap for Wales⁵.

Reviewing patient information:

- Through access to patients' health records, pharmacists will be more fully equipped to deliver the best clinical care for patients.
- Through greater connectivity to real time patient information, pharmacists will provide routine pharmaceutical care for patients, including the large cohort of people with chronic conditions and utilise their clinical pharmacy skills to provide unscheduled care for common ailments, minor injuries and non-life-threatening emergencies.
- In turn, this could lead to new services, taking pressure off GPs and other parts of the health care system.

Reversing the upward trend in prescribing costs:

- By sharing clinical work and caseloads with GPs and the wider primary care team, pharmacists will contribute to greater efficiency across the NHS.
- Pharmacists will make an important contribution to help reverse the upward financial trend in prescription costs.
- Pharmacists will advise on stopping medicines that are not effective (de-prescribing) and will take a lead role in the effective management of polypharmacy to improve health outcomes, and minimise levels of medicines waste.
- Through new service developments the pharmacy workforce will help to reduce medication waste which is estimated to cost up to £50million each year in Wales⁶.

⁵ Roberts, A, Charlesworth (2014) A decade of austerity in Wales? The funding pressures facing the NHS in Wales to 2025/26, Nuffield Trust (June 2014). Available at:

http://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/sites/files/nuffield/publication/140617_decade_of_austerity_wales.pdf

⁶ Welsh Government (2013) Reducing Medicines Waste: A team approach across health and social care. Available at:

<http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/100921pharmwsttoolfinalen.pdf>

About the Royal Pharmaceutical Society

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society is the professional body for pharmacists and pharmacy in England, Scotland and Wales. We are the only body which represents all sectors of pharmacy in Great Britain, providing our members with the support and development they need to fulfil their professional potential.

We are here to promote and represent the professional interests of our members, ensuring that the voice of the profession is heard and promoted in the active development of healthcare policy and services across Great Britain and in each of the devolved countries. Our National Pharmacy Boards in England, Scotland and Wales mean we are ideally placed to meet the specific needs of our members in each of the three countries.

Contact Details:

Royal Pharmaceutical Society

2 Ash Tree Court
Cardiff Gate Business Park
Pontprennau
Cardiff
CF23 8RW

Tel: 02920 730310

Email: Wales@rpharms.com

Web: www.rpharms.com
