

Press Release



1 August 2004

SANDRA GIDLEY MP ADDRESSES NPA BOARD MEETING

Sandra Gidley, MP for Romsey and Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for the Elderly, was a special guest at the July NPA Board Meeting. The main purpose of the visit was to get a perspective on how community pharmacy - and the various issues facing the profession - is perceived by Parliamentarians.

During her informal presentation, Mrs Gidley, who is the only qualified pharmacist in the House of Commons, highlighted to Board Members that until the OFT report, many backbenchers had very little awareness of pharmacists' potential, or the ever increasing range of healthcare services provided by local community pharmacies. However, as a result of the high profile lobbying campaign by the NPA and other pharmacy bodies, and petitions by pharmacists and their customers, MPs have been left in no doubt of pharmacy's value at the heart of the local community.

However, although pharmacy is moving rapidly up the political agenda - and pharmacy's political profile has never been higher - she felt that it was important not to lose the momentum and groundswell of goodwill. In her view, there was still a need to keep reminding MPs and the public about the benefits of community pharmacy services. And, she suggested, the All Party Pharmacy Group has a valuable role to play in this respect.

Mrs Gidley urged the NPA to encourage its members to continue to lobby their local MP to reinforce the case for retaining access to good, local pharmacy services. She advised Board Members that direct contact was the best way to engage their MP.

In her position as Lib-Dem Spokesperson for the Elderly, Mrs Gidley said that she felt strongly that there was a very clear opportunity and pressing need for community pharmacy to play a more proactive role in medication reviews for the over-75's.

NPA Chairman, Ash Soni, commented: "The Board listened with interest to Sandra's observations. For those of us who have worked hard at building positive working relationships with our local MPs, it was heartening to hear that we are on the right track with our lobbying initiatives."

John D'Arcy, NPA Chief Executive, added: "During her political career Sandra has proved a strong and authoritative advocate for community pharmacy. Her visit was greatly appreciated, and the brief Q&A session after her presentation gave us a good opportunity to also touch on other hot topics, such as pharmacy IT and the opportunities for pharmacy in medication reviews."

ENDS