

Press Release



29 August 2003

NPA RESPONSE TO DoH CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON REFORMING AND MODERNISING NHS PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES

Commenting on today's publication of the details of the Government's proposals to modernise and improve the range of services English pharmacies offer patients, John D'Arcy, Chief Executive of The National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA), said:

"Although we have always regarded the OFT recommendation as being 'a solution looking for a problem' - we share the Government's commitment to put the needs of patients first, and we note their intention to maintain the vital services provided by community pharmacies. Our core concern has been to protect neighbourhood community pharmacies that patients value so much – and which provide such real benefits for local communities and the NHS. The NPA's ethos has always been to move forward with the business of ensuring pharmacy's contribution to primary healthcare services. Accordingly, we particularly welcome the strengthened role for Primary Care Trusts in planning pharmacy services for their patients. As part of this, our members will be working with Primary Care Trusts at local level, to ensure that pharmacy services match the needs of local communities.

We are encouraged that a new Advisory Group, chaired by Mrs Anne Galbraith, will be set up to advise Government how best to implement changes to the current system. As the body representing the professional interests of some 11,000 community pharmacies, we believe we could make a vital contribution to the Advisory Group.

We want to work with the Government to ensure that the proposed reforms really do strike the right balance for patients, local communities, pharmacists and the NHS. In doing so, we will take time to study the proposals in great detail, to ensure they provide the flexibility that is needed to enhance service provision where this is required, and, crucially, that they meet the needs of patients and health commissioners."

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Notes to Editors:

1. The National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA) is the trade association that represents the professional and commercial interests of the owners of around 11,000 community pharmacies in the United Kingdom.

2. The NHS (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations were introduced in 1987. The Regulations set out the procedure for the inclusion of pharmacies in the pharmaceutical lists of health authorities. Only pharmacies included in a pharmaceutical list are entitled to provide NHS pharmaceutical services. Inclusion is based on whether pharmacies are necessary or desirable for the adequate provision of pharmaceutical services in any given neighbourhood.
3. In its submission document - '*Realising The Potential of Community Pharmacy: Assuring Public Access to The Pharmacy Network*' – the Association made a robust case in support of the existing Regulations, the keystone that underpins the pharmacy network, by supporting and delivering a rationally distributed pharmacy service in all the places where people live, shop and work. The NPA further argued that they were an effective means by which Government discharged its duty of ensuring patients have widespread access to NHS pharmaceutical services through a viable community pharmacy network.
4. For more information, please contact the NPA Press Office, on: 01727-858687, ext 3340, 3227, 3265, 3311.