

Press Release



5 February 2003

NPA 'CONSTRUCTIVE MEETING' WITH HEALTH MINISTER ON OFT REPORT

The National Pharmaceutical Association met Health Minister, David Lammy, on 4 February, to discuss the implications of the Office of Fair Trading's review into the market for retail pharmacy services and the Control of Entry Regulations governing NHS pharmacy contracts. During the discussions, NPA Chairman, Terry Hannawin, and Chief Executive, John D'Arcy, robustly expressed the Association's grave concerns at the report's stark and radical recommendation, which the NPA contends is based purely upon competition policy and is in direct conflict with existing health policy and planning objectives.

The NPA has consistently argued that experimentation on this scale – without a compelling, demonstrated need – will lead to unintended, unforeseen negative consequences.

Speaking after the meeting, John D'Arcy said: "The time we spent with the Minister and his advisors proved to be both constructive and valuable. We stressed in the strongest possible terms the fundamental incompatibility between a totally deregulated marketplace and the Government's commitment to deliver a well-planned and well-managed NHS Pharmacy network. We emphasised that the Report misses the point by totally disregarding the fact that pharmacy's integral role is within the NHS, with its principal focus being the provision of NHS pharmacy services. Most importantly, we reminded David Lammy that it ignored the views of the core consumer for NHS pharmacy services: the DoH itself! "

Other important issues raised by the NPA included:

- § the serious consequences for the implementation of the Government's plans for NHS services
- § the timing of the report: just as we are trying to drive forward the national Pharmacy Plans; exploring a new contract and system of remuneration, and dealing with the restructuring of PCTs
- § the widespread instability in the marketplace and blight on pharmacy investment in premises and service development which would result from abandoning controls
- § the NPA's inherent doubts as to whether the OFT recommendation would actually deliver the stated benefits

Mr Hannawin added: "The Minister was keen to hear our views. We explained why deregulation was clearly not a good deal for Government – who would lose out on a golden opportunity to realise pharmacy's potential in helping them meet health targets. We highlighted to the Minister that the real losers would be patients – who would inevitably pay the price of lower pharmacy provision."

This initial meeting about the OFT report will form the foundation for future NPA discussions with the DoH. The Association will submit to the DoH a robust submission, detailing its views, by the end of February.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. For more information, please contact the NPA Press Office, on: 01727-858687, ext 3265, 3227, and 3311.