

Briefing 014/25: Summary of June 2025 Committee Meeting

Community Pharmacy England met in Liverpool for a full Committee meeting on 25th and 26th June 2025. Committee discussions included updates on the current political context and pressures exerting on the sector, implementation of the agreed changes to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF), economic projects and ongoing work around medicines supply and margin. The Committee also considered positioning and messaging ahead of the next CPCF negotiations, which are expected to commence in the autumn.

The Committee were joined by LPC leaders from the North West region for part of the meeting. LPC attendees had the chance to talk with Committee Members, observe subcommittee meetings and provide feedback from their local pharmacy owners and localities.

Overview of the full Committee Meeting

The full Committee considered the following topics at the June meeting.

Economic Projects: Evaluations of Funding and Margin

PA Consulting, an independent consultancy with extensive experience working across Government, shared progress on the three projects they've been working on with our policy teams.

- **Implications of the funding settlement on the sector:** PA is assessing possible implications, using scenarios and modelling that we hope to use as illustrative examples to put in front of Government. There was a general discussion around what Committee members want PA to be aware of and try to reference when finalising the outputs of this work. We need to find out what Government is prepared to do to fill the current gap, before we can think about how to maintain or grow.
- **Evaluation of retained margin:** PA is considering the wider policy objectives of retained margin including how international health systems utilise pharmaceutical price control (in a multitude of ways). They will highlight areas where the system is not working as intended, then explore reforms, including alternatives to having retained margin. The analysis needs to be fact-based, being mindful of current perceptions.

- **Evaluation of contracting and funding models:** PA is exploring the effectiveness of alternative funding models for specific community pharmacy services, beginning with the development of a framework setting out the current model and identifying alternative approaches. These alternative options will then begin to be assessed in the next stage.

Lessons learned from the 2024/25 and 2025/26 CPCF Negotiations

As is our usual practice, the Negotiating Team carried out a 'Lessons Learned' exercise on the negotiations to:

- Reflect on those elements we want to retain or build on, and those that we want to avoid in future; reviewing strategy, scope, process, capabilities and relationships;
- Reflect on implementation of the current contract; and
- The key elements we need to take into account in preparing for our next negotiations.

The Committee reflected on the exercise and contributed their own thoughts and views – to inform planning.

Political Update and Negotiations Preparation

The Committee discussed independent insights on the recent Spending Review and the pressures on the NHS settlement as well as some of the emerging themes of the NHS 10-Year Health Plan due to be published soon, including systems reform, neighbourhood health teams, technology and patient directed access to care and records.

The Committee then explored what these meant for Community Pharmacy England's messaging and our goals for achieving a sustainable funding and operating model for the sector, and first thoughts on preparations for the next round of negotiations. The Committee had table discussions on negotiating priorities and messages for the next meeting with the Minister – including the feedback from our pre-Committee pressures survey. Unsurprisingly closing the funding gap and achieving a sustainable funding and operational model was the most important priority for the Committee. Further work will be carried out by the pharmacy funding team on modelling and scenario planning to develop our objectives and negotiating strategy. This thinking will be augmented by engagement with the sector during our programme of summer regional events where we will be asking pharmacy owners to input to our objectives for future negotiations.

Dispensing Projects Update

Our consultant, James Davies, has been undertaking work to explore pharmacist flexibility around dispensing, noting the relevant recommendation from the Health and Social Care Select Committee Inquiry into Pharmacy, and a recent coroner's case of a patient who died due to a delay in receiving antibiotics. The proposed flexibilities aim to enable pharmacists to better: meet the clinical needs of patients, provide patients with access to medicines in a timely manner, and manage supply disruptions. There was consideration of approaches in other countries.

Potential concerns about such pharmacist flexibilities which may be raised by stakeholders have also been examined as part of the project, alongside the operational complexities of implementing flexibilities. The Committee considered a potential model for use in England and the necessary associated legislative and IT infrastructure changes.

James Davies also gave brief updates on his two other projects being undertaken for Community Pharmacy England on branded generics and period of treatment.

Janet Morrison, Chief Executive of Community Pharmacy England, said:

"The Committee met during a particularly critical period of work with DHSC and NHSE to implement agreed changes to services and explore ways to move forward on some of the commitments made in the CPCF settlement. The team have been keeping up the momentum to provide pharmacy owners with information and paperwork as early as possible to aid their planning and preparation.

In terms of our own planning, we have been using specialists who speak Government's language to explore the sector's challenges in-depth and recommend ways forward on critical issues such as funding models, margin and medicines supply. Committee Members also took time to reflect on recent negotiations and the previous relationship building with the new Government and how these lessons could help us achieve better outcomes in future.

But our most pressing tasks will be responding to the greatly anticipated NHS 10-Year Plan and exploring priorities for next CPCF negotiations, which will be augmented by our sector workshops over the summer. Those events will be crucial for shaping the messages we take to policymakers."

Engaging with Pharmacy Owners

Ahead of the June Committee Meeting, pharmacy owners were polled on their views of recent and upcoming developments such as the addition of emergency contraception to the Pharmacy Contraception Service, skill mix changes, and core hours flexibility. We also asked about confidence in the Government's support of the sector, as well as monitoring ongoing business pressures through our regular pressures tracker. Key findings were:

- Service and regulatory developments to the CPCF have been welcomed:
 - Four out of five are positive or very positive about the addition of emergency contraception to the Pharmacy Contraception Service.
 - 94% are considering using the new application route for rearranging core opening hours, and most are planning to use the new skill mix flexibilities for services.
- But pharmacies are still struggling financially, and the majority are unsure about the Government's commitment to work towards a sustainable funding and operational model for the sector.
- Considering priorities for inclusion in the NHS 10-Year Health Plan, shifting funding from secondary to primary care, commissioning more preventative healthcare from community pharmacies, aligning primary care contracts, and expanding pharmacy's role to take on more work from GPs were all viewed as highly important priorities. But shifting funding came out as the top priority.

Analysis of the results was considered by Committee Members and, as always, fed into discussions on priorities. The Committee drew on this valuable information, augmented with feedback from the Regional Representatives and LPC attendees, at various stages throughout the meeting. The findings were also considered in terms of our ongoing influencing work at the Communications and Public Affairs Subcommittee.

Subcommittee Meetings

Discussions from Governance Subcommittees

Audit and Risk (A&R) Subcommittee

The chair of A&R gave a summary of the most recent meeting. The accounts for last year are being audited. Levy collections are on target. Committee member expenses, Key Performance Indicators

(KPIs) and the risk register were all reviewed. Consideration was given to a paper on how Community Pharmacy England allocates levy to LPCs.

Governance and People (G&P) Subcommittee

Following the conclusion of the Chair recruitment process, the G&P subcommittee made a recommendation of an appointment, which was accepted by the Committee. The new Chair will be formally appointed and take up their role in September. A further meeting of this subcommittee will take place in July when agenda items include discussion of LPC feedback on committee composition (Community Pharmacy England and the LPC Model Constitution).

Updates from Advisory and Policy Subcommittees

Service Development Subcommittee (SDS)

On progress with implementing the changes to CPCF services and the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS) implementation, it was reported that the PQS clinical audit has been signed off and will be published by NHS England shortly. Pharmacy owners can undertake the audit between 1st September 2025 and 31st March 2026.

Work is continuing with NHS England to update service specifications in line with the agreed changes to the services and the subcommittee undertook a detailed review of those specifications. Draft versions of the Pharmacy Contraception Service (PCS) and updated and new patient group directions (PGD) [have been published on the NHSBSA website](#) to allow pharmacy owners and their teams to start to prepare for the changes to the service later in the year, including the inclusion of emergency contraception (EC). The publication of the draft documents is also intended to support IT system suppliers to update their systems.

Following a clinical review process, the Pharmacy First clinical pathways and associated PGDs have been updated and [similarly published in draft form](#) to support IT system updates and to provide advance notice of changes to pharmacy owners and their teams. IT system suppliers are currently considering the changes that need to be made to their systems to reflect the updated pathways and PGDs and the date from when the new pathways and PGDs will apply within the Pharmacy First service will be agreed and announced in due course.

Ongoing work with NHS England on the Flu vaccination service specification, ahead of the start of the 2025/26 programme, was reviewed as part of wider discussions on the development of pharmacy vaccination services.

SDS noted the publication of the first set of data from the Community Pharmacy England / Healthwatch England Pharmacy First patient survey in a dashboard on our [website](#). The overall feedback received from patients on the service is very positive, but relatively few pharmacy teams are currently promoting this survey to patients. We encourage all pharmacy owners to flag the survey to patients who have received a minor illness or clinical pathways consultation. Data from the survey will support our communications and influencing campaigns as well as promoting Pharmacy First to the public.

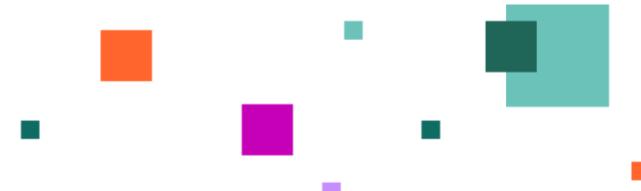
The results of a survey of LPCs on local activity within Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) on the development of integrated neighbourhood teams (INTs) were reviewed, ahead of a webinar next week for LPCs to report back and discuss the findings. LPC observers at the meeting also shared some of their local experiences in relation to the development of INTs. So far, local activity and involvement of community pharmacy in this new approach to teamworking is very variable across the country. This reflects the fact some ICBs are quite advanced with INTs and others are only just starting to engage locally. It is hoped that greater clarity on this policy area will be provided in the Government's forthcoming NHS 10-Year Plan. We will provide further guidance to pharmacy owners and LPCs on this topic over the coming months and will support information sharing on local developments across the LPC network.

Funding and Contract (FunCon) Subcommittee

Subcommittee members reflected on a number of topics which are the subject of ongoing discussions with DHSC. Important steers were given on DHSC's proposals for Category C reimbursement reforms (and their implications for patient safety) and special containers. It was noted that the Dispensing and Supply Team had argued well on this latter topic, but there were still areas of contention.

A paper on direct cost reimbursement (including business rates) was debated. This shared data on GPs' and dentists' costs and set out equivalent costs for the pharmacy sector. A variety of useful opinions were shared.

An update was given on retained medicines purchase margin and the implications for the July Drug Tariff. Community Pharmacy England has protested strongly against further increases in margin recovery at this time, and is applying pressure to DHSC to share more information about the current status of margin delivery with pharmacy owners.



An update was given on strategic work on margins. The PA Consulting work on this topic was covered earlier in this briefing. Other projects on understanding the variation in margin and the impact on branded generics were discussed.

An update was also given on CPCF implementation projects. This covered Pharmacy First caps and the review of the contractor payment timetable.

FunCon members also received background papers briefing them on forecasting, data handling and price concessions.

Legislation and Regulatory Subcommittee (LRS)

The subcommittee reviewed draft PLPS amendment regulations for hub and spoke dispensing. There was agreement, in principle, to the draft amendment regulations and it was noted that DHSC was still to clarify several issues.

LRS considered various proposals for regulatory asks including the option of late claims (it was noted that some pharmacy owners are unable to claim significant sums of money to which they are entitled due to missing deadlines), whether the responsible pharmacist should be able to be absent from the pharmacy (as permitted by regulations) if/when changes to the legislation on supervision are taken forward by Government as expected, and limited-service provision (for example, providing only one Advanced service during additional evening hours). It was suggested that LPCs be asked for their views on regulatory changes they would wish to see.

The subcommittee discussed this year's CPAF screening questions (due to be available in July) with the full questionnaire to follow for some pharmacy owner (in October). It was agreed in principle.

LPC and Contractor Support (LCS) Subcommittee

The LCS subcommittee considered plans for upcoming events to engage with LPCs and pharmacy owners. Through July each Community Pharmacy England region will have an LPC meeting with the Community Pharmacy England team in the afternoon, followed by a pharmacy owner workshop in the evening. Subcommittee members were pleased to see the shift to a more interactive and workshop-based style for this year's engagement events, giving pharmacy owners a chance to get involved and feed into what Community Pharmacy England takes into negotiations. [Sign up for an event near you](#).

Planning has begun for this year's LPC Conference on 25th November, with a working group of LPCs being formed to help shape the agenda and content. The LPC attendees to the meeting shared their

views on the benefits of table discussions and the importance of covering topical items. Members also reflected on the success of the [recent meeting of the Forum of LPC Chairs](#) in the Houses of Parliament, with Regional Representatives sharing very positive feedback from Chairs in their localities.

The subcommittee received an update on the consultation on changes to the LPC Constitution, which has been extended to the end of the month to give more time for LPCs to respond. Independent governance expert, Victoria Finney, has been commissioned to analyse and report back on all the feedback received, and make recommendations.

Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee

Held at the end of the Committee Meeting, the CPA subcommittee had a broad discussion about how to communicate the ongoing work and outputs to the sector, noting the importance of sharing how pharmacy owner polling is being used to inform strategy and decision-making.

Members considered plans for sector engagement in the coming months, including through the [regional workshop events](#) and [attendance at this year's Pharmacy Show](#). The subcommittee also shared suggestions on the content of Community Pharmacy England's annual report. The report would reflect on the funding settlement and the significant funding shortfall that remains, with financial challenges continuing to be felt across the board. Other significant developments, such as celebrating the sector's achievements during the first full year of Pharmacy First and recognising the recent support for pharmacy in Parliament, will be included too.

CPA reflected on the latest messaging for MPs – updated in light of the Spending Review announcement – and plans for further amendments following publication of the NHS 10-Year Health Plan. The effectiveness of Community Pharmacy England's constituency-based MP briefings was commended.

If you have any questions or require more information, please contact: comms.team@cpe.org.uk