

# **APPG brings together front bench health teams and community pharmacy leaders**

**24 April 2009**

The All-Party Pharmacy Group has concluded a series of meetings at Westminster between senior representatives of the major pharmacy bodies, and key individuals from the health teams of the leading political parties.

The Chief Executives of the CCA, NPA, and PSNC, and the President of the RPSGB attended the meetings. The initiative enabled the pharmacy representatives to engage directly with front bench spokespeople from the Labour party, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. Discussions focused on current issues affecting pharmacy and consideration of how community pharmacy can contribute to the political parties' health plans moving forward.

Dr Howard Stoate MP (Labour, Dartford), Chair of the APPG said: "It is rare for an all-party group to be able to facilitate meetings with policy makers in each of the main parties. It tells us that, for each of the parties, pharmacy is an important element in the development of health policy and health services. Everyone involved found it extremely useful. In our meeting with the Pharmacy Minister, Phil Hope MP, I am pleased that we agreed a set of action points, and I have written to Phil to take matters forward. The primary action is the need to tackle inconsistent commissioning of pharmacy services among PCTs. The Minister committed himself to addressing this, and will use his influence over PCTs to ensure there is pharmacy representation at board level in all PCTs, not just a few. That will really help to ensure that commissioners take informed decisions about pharmacy services, and it will help to instil added confidence among pharmacists locally. I'm pleased the Department is formulating its communication to PCTs about this matter right now."

Baroness Cumberlege (Conservative) said: "These meetings provided a unique platform to fly the flag for community pharmacists and set out their current and potential contribution to public health. In our meeting with Andrew Lansley and Mark Simmonds, we discussed the role of community pharmacy in delivering public health services such as sexual health, weight management and smoking cessation, as well as the importance of growing the number of services in the Advanced and Directed Enhanced categories. My front bench colleagues are hugely positive about pharmacy and very much appreciated hearing the profession's view on issues such as Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments, and how best to develop relationships with GPs. They have asked for – and received - further briefing in light of the meeting."

Sandra Gidley MP (Liberal Democrat, Romsey) said: "We have seen from these meetings that there is a real consensus about community pharmacy that crosses the political divide. It clearly makes sense to utilise pharmacy's capability in delivering new NHS services and tackling public health priorities in local communities. Community Pharmacy has huge potential, but importantly has the desire to take on more responsibility in the future. I am delighted that all parties now recognise this, and that these meetings have resulted in a set of action points that can ultimately contribute to real change for pharmacy and for patients. The All-Party Pharmacy Group is in the process of following up with each of the policy teams, and pushing for implementation of the proposals discussed.'

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Notes to editors

The Officers of the APPG each hosted a meeting with representatives of the main pharmacy organisations, and front bench health spokespeople from their respective parties. All meetings took place in the House of Commons or House of Lords.

Dr Howard Stoate MP hosted a private meeting with Phil Hope MP, Minister for Pharmacy and Care Services on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

Sandra Gidley MP hosted a private meeting with Norman Lamb MP, Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Health on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

Baroness Cumberlege hosted a private meeting with Andrew Lansley MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Health, and Mark Simmonds MP, Shadow Minister of Health, on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

Those attending from the pharmacy organisations were: Rob Darracott (CCA), John Turk (NPA), Sue Sharpe (PSNC) and Steve Churton (RPSGB).

The next public meeting of the All-Party Pharmacy Group will be on 28 April 2009. At this meeting, the Group will be inquiring into progress in implementing the Pharmacy White Paper. Details can be found on the Group's website [www.appg.org.uk](http://www.appg.org.uk)

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