

PSNC WELCOMES CONSERVATIVES' FOCUS ON PHARMACY

18 January - On 13 January, the Conservative Party published "A Healthier Nation", a Green Paper on public health. The Green Paper emphasises the need for an expanded role for community pharmacy, asserting that "a Conservative Government would support proposals to develop pharmacist involvement in the area of preventive care...once accepted, these measures would be integrated into the Pharmacy Contract."

The Green Paper also states that "pharmacies and their staff are a vital resource for healthcare and condition management; they are close to the communities they serve and well placed to provide information about medical conditions, lifestyle choices and medicines management" and "they are many people's most frequent link to a knowledgeable health professional".

The measures proposed in the Green Paper follow a statement made in the party's "Reform Plan for the NHS" (published on 4 January) that a Conservative Government would be in favour of "allowing patients to use local pharmacists for services like screening and the treatment of minor ailments".

Responding to the publication of the Green Paper, PSNC Chief Executive Sue Sharpe said:

"I was delighted to see the Conservatives strongly endorse an expanded role for community pharmacy. It is now accepted that community pharmacies can be used far more effectively in helping people manage their health. This enthusiasm for a broadening of pharmacy's role is certainly encouraging. As trusted, accessible health professionals working at the heart of their communities, pharmacists have huge potential to improve public health and wellbeing.

"It is reassuring to see that the Conservative Party recognises this. At PSNC's recent Question Time Event, Conservative Party Health Spokesperson Mark Simmonds stated emphatically that pharmacists "have a significant role in the community in helping people to understand the impact of their individual lifestyle choices, and have a key role to play in improving public health and wellbeing". PSNC strongly agrees with this sentiment.

"However, all three parties have work to do in setting out practical, realistic steps to achieve this goal. These should involve measures to substantively improve the commissioning of pharmacy services, give pharmacists greater access to NHS Information Technology, and ensure consistent investment in a wider range of pharmacy services. We look forward to working with all three parties to ensure that their commitments to a broader role for pharmacy are backed by realistic policy proposals".

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1. PSNC (The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee) is the body that represents community pharmacies in England and Wales on NHS matters.

2. The Conservative Party Green Paper “A Healthier Nation” was published on 13 January. A copy can be downloaded at:
http://www.conservatives.com/News/News_stories/2010/01/A_Healthier_Nation.aspx
3. The Conservative Party’s “Reform Plan for the NHS” was published on 4 January. A copy can be found on the Conservative Party website:
<http://www.conservatives.com/Default.aspx>

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