

SENT VIA EMAIL

1st November 2013

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Medicines Policy Branch
Room D3.22
Castle Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

Dear Sirs

Re: Making it Better Through Pharmacy in the Community - Consultation

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposals for a five year strategy for pharmacy in the community.

Older people proportionately use health services the most and as such any changes to pharmaceutical services could significantly impact upon older people. In 2007/08 the average value of NHS services for retired households was £5,200 compared with £2,800 for non-retired¹. The Commissioner is consistently reminded by Older People of the significant role their local pharmacists have in the local community and that they traditionally call in and discuss any health concerns they would have with their local pharmacist, with whom they often have a long-standing relationship.

The strategy proposals outlined in the consultation appear to be well considered and progressive. The Commissioner particularly welcomes the opportunity for patients to avail of care closer to home through the co-operation of pharmacists and other healthcare professionals in the community – and acknowledges that this will become even more significant as the recommendations in “Transforming Your Care” are implemented. Older people have consistently shown a desire to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible and improved access to local care can only enhance such aspirations.

The goal of supporting better health outcomes through the advances in medicines and technology is also to be welcomed. The Commissioner would be keen to see any advances in medicines coupled with equal improvements in preventative care through co-operation with other health agencies and departments. The promotion of active and healthful living has shown possibilities for a corresponding fall in medicinal

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/key-issues-for-the-new-parliament/value-for-money-in-public-services/the-ageing-population/>

care costs as nearly half of all cancer deaths are related to smoking, diet and lack of exercise.²

The progressive nature of the strategic goals laid out in this consultation show a degree of promise in the delivery of pharmaceutical care to our communities. However, any strategy should be implemented as an holistic approach to healthy living in partnership with relevant stakeholders. It is vital that the strategy should be agreed through engagement with older people, including those whose views are harder to be heard, and that the proposed changes in services are communicated clearly to those impacted in a timely and appropriate manner.

If you would like to discuss any of these points in further detail, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Emer Boyle

Emer Boyle
Policy Manager

² Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care, 2012,
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ms/ecfa/healthy_change/docs/rep_healthychange.pdf