

A Devolution Protocol for the RPSGB

Background

1. Since the introduction of political devolution in 1999 in the UK, the RPSGB has sought to shape and influence policy relating to pharmacy in three administrations, the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. Powers that have been transferred away from Westminster have varied, leading to a set of unique relationships between each of the devolved administrations and Westminster. Policy divergence is occurring now, and is expected to increase, particularly if or when different political parties control the various administrations. There are three Departments of Health for England, Wales and Scotland and each has its own strategy for pharmacy.

2. This protocol is intended to provide a framework for co-operation between the RPSGB Council and the English, Scottish and Welsh Pharmacy Boards of the RPSGB and their respective secretariats.

Principles

3. The RPSGB Council affirms its support for reflecting devolved government in the Society's structures and ways of working. The Council wishes to co-operate with the national Pharmacy Boards on all matters relating to the Boards' functions as agreed by the RPSGB Council, these being to:

1. Provide strategic leadership and support for pharmacy practice development in [country].
2. Assist development of Council policy and its implementation in [country], and develop and implement policy specific to [country].
3. Promote the science and practice of pharmacy and its contribution to health.
4. Provide professional advice to government and its agencies, NHS bodies, and other health and social care organisations in [country].
5. Support the Society's Branches in [country].
6. Support pharmacists in their professional roles in [country].

4. The RPSGB needs to ensure that it responds effectively to the challenges and opportunities posed by devolution – both in the way that it responds to outside organisations, and in how business is conducted in the Council and its national Pharmacy Boards. In all cases care must be taken to maintain lines of accountability, and recognise the rights and responsibilities that come from devolution. The Council and its national Pharmacy Boards will seek to work in a mutually supportive manner, with good communication and early involvement of all appropriate groups. This will build on existing working relationships that have already been established with the previous bodies of the Scottish and Welsh Executives and the Society's staff in Scotland and Wales. Timely and effective communications between the Council and the national Pharmacy Boards will be needed to ensure the RPSGB as a whole is stronger and not fragmented as a consequence of devolution.

5. The Council remains the governing body of the RPSGB. It is the major policy-making body of the Society and is accountable for the discharge of all the Society's functions. The Boards are therefore accountable to the Council. The Council and the national Pharmacy Boards will inform each other through their respective secretariats at the earliest opportunity of any matter arising which is likely to be of mutual interest. Some matters relating to the Boards' agreed functions may have a

potential resource impact or may constrain policy development elsewhere within the RPSGB. In such cases, the Council will be alerted through its secretariat and views will be sought from those who are potentially affected at the earliest reasonable opportunity. These views will be taken into account in any decisions taken by the relevant Board/s. There will be a responsibility on the Council and the national Pharmacy Boards to respond in a timely and effective manner to any request for views on matters relating to the Boards' agreed functions. If the Council or a national Pharmacy Board is unable to comply with the timeframe for a request for views then this must be notified to the relevant secretariat as soon as possible.

6. A national Pharmacy Board may need to respond to a consultation relating to a matter on which RPSGB policy has not been established. In such a case, if it is impracticable for the Council to determine policy within the required timescale, then the policy as agreed by the Board and notified to the Council will be adopted as the interim policy of the RPSGB until such time as the Council is able to review it. A Board may make new policy as described in response to a consultation when the issues involved affect only that country. The policy developed by the Board will be informed by any other extant Council policy which has a bearing on the issue. The Council reserves the right to amend or revoke the said policy but only after appropriate consultation with the relevant national Pharmacy Board and having fully considered any implications for the Pharmacy Board and the profession in the particular country where the policy was developed.

7. Some of the work that is appropriate for the Boards will have implications for more than one GB country and there may be a need to take account of the relevant countries' policies, legislation and practice in the production of the work. In these cases it will be necessary to agree a process for the identification and handling of such issues. The latter is likely to vary according to the nature of the issue. A Liaison Group will agree the methodology for dealing with and signing off work on issues that are within existing Council policy but affect more than one GB country. This may be on a case by case basis or, more generally, by agreeing the methodology to be used for a certain category of issues.

8. The Council and the national Pharmacy Boards will work closely together to ensure that the pharmacy profession is represented within the context of the public benefit and in an effective and professional manner at all levels of Government.

9. The Council and the national Pharmacy Boards will consult with each other on all issues relating to the Boards' agreed functions that impact on GB-wide interests. When a Board is dealing with an external body, it should be aware of any potential impact on relations between external bodies and other parts of the Society or relations with the Society as an organisation, and should consult as appropriate.

10. The Secretary & Registrar and other Directors of the RPSGB will maintain effective liaison arrangements and consultation procedures with the Directors of the national Pharmacy Boards of the RPSGB. The Directors of the national Pharmacy Boards will provide advice and support to those Boards in discharging their functions. In addition, they will provide advice to the RPSGB Council as appropriate.

Operation

11. This protocol does not create legal obligations or restrictions on any party, though it is the intention that the national Pharmacy Boards of the RPSGB and the RPSGB Council will manage their business with regard to this protocol wherever possible. It is recognised that there may be circumstances where full adherence is

impractical. In these cases the national Pharmacy Boards and the Council will act as closely as possible in line with the spirit of this protocol and will seek to rectify any shortfall at the earliest opportunity. The national Pharmacy Boards and the Council will take steps to ensure these exceptions are kept to a minimum.

12. Each Board Chairman will make an annual report to the Council. Minutes of each Board will be circulated to the Council and to the other Boards.

13. Any dispute or problem relating to the Boards which cannot be resolved informally will be brought to the Council for resolution.

Finance

14. The national Pharmacy Boards will, at the earliest opportunity, inform and consult the Resource Management Committee of the Council through its secretary about proposals for new policy initiatives or changes to existing policy that may directly or indirectly have an impact on the finances of the RPSGB.

15. Any additional costs affecting the national Pharmacy Boards arising directly from policy changes to be considered by the Council should be identified and views sought from the relevant national Pharmacy Board/s before the final decision is taken by the RPSGB Council.

Review

16. This protocol will be kept under regular review and will be updated as necessary following joint discussions between the RPSGB Council and the national Pharmacy Boards. There will be a formal review near the end of the first term of office of the Boards, commencing in Autumn 2008. This formal review will be overseen by the Liaison Group and presented to the Council for consideration.