



**Royal Pharmaceutical Society**  
of Great Britain

Helping pharmacists achieve excellence

# Lobbying

# Toolkit

**Influencing decision-makers**  
***A toolkit for pharmacists in Scotland***

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## **What is the toolkit?**

This toolkit, produced by the Scottish Office of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB), is a resource to promote and support lobbying activity by local pharmacists and individual local branches. Through local lobbying, pharmacists can highlight and raise awareness of key issues and seek to influence decision makers and opinion formers.

At national level, the RPSGB runs an extensive lobbying programme to make sure that the views of the profession are represented to government, the NHS and wherever decisions are made. The Scottish Office and the new Scottish Pharmacy Board are committed to ensuring that the profession's voice is heard by key decision makers.

Local lobbying activity can help you to build relationships and influence your local politicians at both national and local council levels, other local healthcare professionals and patient group representatives.

This toolkit aims to give you ideas on how to organise local lobbying activity.

In this toolkit you will find:

- a four-step guide to lobbying
- case studies and ideas for lobbying activity
- information on using the local media
- a sample letter, and press release.

For further information and advice, please contact:

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## At-a-glance guide

- **Decide an approach**

The first thing to do in any campaign is to identify your issue. This could be anything from promoting the role of pharmacists among local opinion-formers to expressing concerns over a specific issue. This may be something you would want to do by yourself or with others. Remember – there is strength in numbers and the more colleagues and supporters you can enlist to your cause, the better. It is, however, important to remember that any campaign should reflect your roles and responsibilities as a health professional. If you are lobbying as part of a RPSGB Branch, you need to ensure that you reflect the policies of the RPSGB.

- **Get writing**

The toolkit explains how to put together an effective campaign letter, highlights what to ask for, and shows you how to go about finding out whom you should contact.

- **Organise an event**

Holding an event can help draw attention to your cause and need not cost much money. The toolkit suggests themes, venues and the kind of cross-section of people you could invite to make an event effective and high profile.

- **Use the local media**

The local press and radio may be interested in your lobbying activity, particularly if you are organising an event. On page **13**, the toolkit sets out a draft press release to help you get your story into the media.

- **Make use of the information available to you**

It helps to be familiar with current issues and have an understanding of the bigger picture. In the event of a discussion drifting away from your issue you can steer it back onto your agenda by keeping them engaged in the conversation.

Briefing papers are produced as a basis for discussions with politicians and key opinion formers on current hot topics. These will be made available when produced to aid you when contacting the press.

- **Where can I get advice?**

Members of staff at the Scottish Office are happy to offer help and advice on how to become an even more effective campaigner.

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### **Step 1: What's up?**

Asking yourself "What's up?" is the starting point. You will probably have met your MSP and local councillors at local events or functions and taken the opportunity to raise issues of concern. The difference between this kind of casual contact and lobbying is that lobbying is a targeted and planned activity, with the aim of raising a particular issue and bringing influence to bear on the way that it is viewed and, ultimately, the way that it is resolved.

Before you start, it will be important to identify existing lines of communication such as the local RPSGB Branch and Region; the Scottish Pharmacy Board, the Area Pharmaceutical Committee and perhaps other pharmacy organisations. A co-ordinated approach is best wherever possible, although there can be strength in bringing different perspectives to bear on a given issue.

Issues could include:

- getting across your profession's views on the Scottish Executive's health policies
- a particular issue of concern, for example, the disposal of medicines, independent prescribing or the NHS IT network
- promoting good practice, or showcasing innovation in a local pharmacy
- a country-specific issue such as a development in health or social care policy
- a local healthcare issue.

When you have decided what issue you want to raise, you then need to think carefully about how best to put your views across to people. This is known as shaping your message. It is important to think about the perspective of the person you want to influence and to try to speak to their agenda. Be constructive – effective lobbying is about presenting solutions as well as problems. It is important that you avoid the appearance of being motivated out of self interest, so you should emphasise that you are speaking as a health professional with the public interest at heart.

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## **Step 2: Who to contact?**

When you have identified the issue you want to raise, you then need to consider whom you want to communicate with. In many instances, you will want to contact a combination of local decision-makers and influencers. However, you will need to prioritise. If you want to raise a local health issue, the primary care organisation may be the obvious choice. If you want to get across your views about Scottish Executive policies, MSPs will be an important local contact as the Scottish Parliament has responsibility for health policy.

As you may know every Scottish resident is represented by eight MSPs: one constituency MSP and seven regional MSPs. It should be noted that all have equal status in the Parliament and so should be equally considered when identifying whom you are to communicate with.

There are instances when it may be useful to include your MP in the discussion of your issue. MPs continue to look for matters in the Westminster field of interest in which they can engage and keep up their local profile.

However, for the purpose of this toolkit, the main focus is on building a relationship with your constituency and regional MSPs.

### **Contacting your MSP**

MSPs receive hundreds of letters, telephone calls, e-mails and invitations every week. Most MSPs have offices both in their constituency or region and in the Parliament in Edinburgh. When Parliament is sitting, business is generally held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. MSPs usually spend these days at the Scottish Parliament and Mondays and Fridays in their constituency or region. Many MSPs also make themselves available over the weekend for events, meetings and surgeries.

Many pharmacists will know their local MSP and some will have made contact previously. If you do not know your local MSP, you can find out who it is at, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msp/index.htm#Postcode>

The same website will also provide biographical details and contact information for the constituency and Regional List MSPs.

Information about identifying and contacting your MP can be obtained from the Scottish Office of the RPSGB.

Contact with your MSP can be through correspondence or in person. Correspondence is the best method of contact if you wish to raise an urgent or very specific matter. In most cases, constituents' letters and e-mails are dealt with by the staff of the politician.

Making contact with the MSP in person is an effective way of building a good relationship and encouraging them to take up the issues you want to raise. However, it is important to make contact in a way that is timely and organised. Obviously, if a parliamentarian calls into a pharmacy to pick up a prescription, or if you bump into him/her at a local event, it may not be the best time to lobby them!

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It is better to request either a short meeting, or surgery appointment by telephoning the MSP's constituency office, or organise an event involving your MSP. In some cases a pre-briefing document is preferred. You need to consider when this option is appropriate and how to make arrangements. Event ideas are outlined in the *Case studies* and *Ideas* section later in this toolkit. A quick way of contacting your MSP is to call the Scottish Parliament mainline number on 0131 348 5000 and asking to be put through to their parliamentary office.

### **Your local authority**

As local healthcare providers (and perhaps as local business leaders too), pharmacists have every reason to build relationships with the local council. Councils make important decisions on issues such as planning, regeneration and development, highways, community safety and the funding and location of local services such as schools, leisure facilities, public transport and housing provision. All of these issues potentially impact on pharmacy.

It is important to identify which is the relevant local authority for your area. In Scotland there are 32 unitary authorities. Local authorities in Scotland also have a role of local "health scrutiny". This requires a panel of councillors to consider issues relating to the provision of local health services. The council will consult with providers and users of services and may call witnesses to give information and evidence in person. These powers are being strengthened by the government to relate to all local health services and will therefore be of interest to both hospital and community pharmacists.

In contacting the council, it is also important to consider whether it is best to communicate with a member of staff at the council, or with an elected councillor. It often is best to make initial contact with the local councillor representing your area who will be in a position to assist you or suggest which other councillor or staff member you should contact.

Information about and contact details for your council can be found on the council website or by telephoning the main council switchboard number

### **Local healthcare bodies**

There is a range of local health bodies, representing providers and users of services which pharmacists may want to engage with as part of a programme of lobbying activity, either to raise the profile of the profession, or highlight a specific issue. Community Health Partnerships (CHPs) are being established by NHS Boards as key building blocks in the modernisation of NHSScotland. Working with the Boards, the CHPs provide a focus for the integration between primary care and specialist services to ensure that localised health improvement is the focus of NHS service planning and delivery. Other local organisations may exist to promote patient involvement such as the Scottish Health Council who have local offices in each NHS Board area.

### **Third party endorsement**

A truly effective lobby will have the backing of other stakeholders: patients, the general public, other health professions and healthcare providers. There is no better way of adding weight and influence to your message than to have broad stakeholder support, so think

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about whom else you can involve, and how you can generate maximum impact through stakeholder support.

### **The local media**

The local media can be a key part of your local lobbying activity. For example, if you are meeting with your local MSP and/or other community leaders, you may want to invite local press to send journalists and photographers. This has the benefit of being an added incentive for people to participate in the event, and giving publicity to your profession locally. You should also make your own arrangements for a photograph, such as by taking your own digital camera. These pictures can then be emailed to local media, pharmacy sector media, such as The Pharmaceutical Journal and used in your own materials, such as on your website.

A media dimension to the event can also be a helpful way of shaping the ongoing activity and encourage the MSP to engage in the issues. If, for example, the MSP is participating in a media interview, he/she will want to sound knowledgeable and interested in the issues relating to pharmacy and will need to say how he/she intends to take up the issues.

In planning media contact, you need to identify all possible outlets for your story from mainstream local papers to the trade and free press, and radio and TV stations.

Remember, no outlet is too small: often the free sheets circulated in residential areas are more widely read than national dailies.

Do you have any media contacts already? Personal contacts with journalists, whether from previous coverage, family and friends or just a friendly phone call, can be the quickest way to a story.

If not, identify the contact name of the right person for your type of story. This is not difficult: just looking through your local paper you will see the “by-line” of journalists next to the stories they write, and this should help you to identify who is writing on similar themes to yours.

If you are “cold-calling” a newspaper, or local radio, just ask for the name of the most relevant person to your story – such as the news editor/desk for tomorrow’s or future news stories; the features editor for longer, more discursive articles, or the picture editor for photo-calls. Larger regional newspapers may have a health editor or other specialist correspondents.

You may want to issue a press release about the event. A template press release is included in this toolkit.

It is important to involve, and where appropriate, give prior notice to people you are involving in media activity. For example, if your activity involves a local councillor, or your MSP, you may find that their offices can supply contact information for the local media outlets, or will be prepared to issue a press release to support your cause.

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## A WORD OF CAUTION

This document describes how to involve the media in an event setting when you have something to tell or show.

You should not invite the media to a private meeting with a politician, nor should you issue a press release relating to the meeting or the outcome without first informing or discussing it with the politician.

Always remember, once you have given a story to the media it is theirs to do with as they like including seeking and reporting upon alternative views.

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### **Step 3: Set clear objectives**

Local lobbying activity is an important opportunity to secure action and continuing support from local decision-makers and influencers. You should prepare, in advance, a list of ways in which you want such people to help you and then try to get their commitment.

#### Raising an issue with your **MSP**:

When raising issues with your MSP, you should aim to win his/her commitment to one or more of the following actions, prioritised according to the type of issue you are raising:

- to write to local decision-makers such as the council or local Health Board
- to attend a further meeting, or event, with you
- to write to the Minister for Health and Community Care to highlight the issues you have raised
- to accompany you on a visit to a local pharmacy to observe a practice development or witness an issue
- to table a Written Parliamentary Question or an Oral Parliamentary Question. In the Scottish Parliament oral questions to the First Minister are held weekly with health related oral questions taken every three weeks.
- to table a motion for debate to draw attention to an issue or table a motion with a view to having a Members' Business debate
- to join a relevant Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament.

#### Raising an issue with your **local council**:

Consider asking officers or councillors from your local authority to help in these ways:

- to raise the issue with colleagues, particularly if there is a more appropriate or more senior person who should be involved
- to accompany you on a visit to a local pharmacy to observe a practice development or witness an issue
- to invite you to address an appropriate committee, or meeting at the council, or other relevant local group
- to invite you to attend the health scrutiny committee of the council
- to make a commitment to ongoing consultation with you and provide feedback where appropriate.

#### Raising an issue with your **local health bodies**:

If you have involved other local health professionals or representatives of health bodies in your lobby, the specific ways in which you could ask them to help include:

- an invitation to attend, or make a submission to an appropriate meeting, or committee of a relevant local healthcare body
  - a commitment to continuing dialogue and consultation with you
  - action to raise the issue that you have highlighted with other key influencers or decision makers.
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#### **Step 4: Review and develop activity**

Once you have embarked on local lobbying activities, it is important to take stock and review how successful it has been and how you can build on this activity. The contacts you have made amongst local decision-makers can become a long term “network of influence” that you can use to reinforce your current lobby and to use with future issues that you may wish to lobby on.

For follow up contact activity to be successful, you should refresh your messages and style. For example, a local MSP is likely to be receptive to your request for a meeting if you suggest that you are keen to update him/her, and to thank them for their efforts. However, if it appears that there has been little progress and that the meeting will only serve to repeat your previous communications, the MSP is unlikely to wish to meet you again at this point.

It is obviously very important to thank people for their time in corresponding and meeting with you and to recognise their efforts on your behalf.

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## **Case studies and ideas**

### **Planning an event**

Ideas for events include a visit to a pharmacy by invited guests, a meeting, or consultation event. Ideally, these should take place at pharmacy premises or in another suitable meeting venue such as a hospital.

If you are arranging a visit, it is important to make it interesting and timely. For example, you could arrange a visit by your local MSP to coincide with the unveiling or launch of service improvements or an extension or refit of local pharmacy premises. The visit could be related to a national or local policy initiative such as the launch of new NHS branding for pharmacies, or the launch of a new local service development.

It will be important to include other people in the visit, for example, staff and users of the pharmacy services, perhaps along with representatives of the local council, local healthcare bodies and other health professions.

A meeting or consultation event may be slightly more complicated to arrange than a visit, but could be more effective in capturing the longer term commitment and interest of the people you are inviting, such as councillors or your local MSP. If you are organising a consultation event, you should try to include users of a local pharmacy in the event, where appropriate. If pharmacy premises are not a suitable location for the meeting or event, you should seek an alternative venue that is relevant and interesting. For example, it may be that you wish to facilitate a consultation event at the premises of a local healthcare body, or the local council.

It is important to seek a date and time when the principal guest is available for the visit or meeting, before you make arrangements with other potential participants.

If you are involving the media, you should consider what photo opportunities there will be (ie who will be available for photographing, where and what they will be doing) and how this relates to the issues you are raising with the participants.

As you will probably be aware, the best pictures have people in shot and the participants are engaged in some sort of activity. The picture should be self-explanatory, if possible. If you get the opportunity, talk to professional photographers about how to get a strong image and the best way to set up a photo opportunity.

### **A 'good practice' case study**

A contact strategy could be used to highlight and promote good practice at a local pharmacy. This could be beneficial in establishing contact with key local decision-makers and can help to promote pharmacists' services to users and the public, particularly if you are able to get the local media to give coverage to the story. 'Good practice' stories are also a good way of involving your local MSP, as they may want to consider how to raise this with the government and in parliament.

Increasing numbers of local community pharmacies are being repositioned and refitted to provide a wider range of services in innovative settings. Holding a meeting or public seminar in such a venue, inviting the local MSP, local councillors, press and key figures at the

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primary care organisation can create a highly effective impression. Often it works well to invite the influencer to speak as it gives them a “photo opportunity” and also makes them think about pharmacy issues.

**Example letter to your MSP**

Name of your MSP  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Date

(Salutation should be handwritten)

**Innovation in (community/hospital/primary care) pharmacy  
Date, Time, Venue**

As a constituent of yours, I am writing to highlight the work currently being carried out at [name] pharmacy and to invite you to visit us.

As you will be aware, the pharmacy profession has seen great change over the last few years. Pharmacists have been given increasing responsibility in the provision of front-line primary health care. In secondary and tertiary care, pharmacists are developing their roles as key members of the clinical team providing patient care. (Follow with a sentence about the specific area of pharmacy practice that you are focusing on).

We are holding an event to celebrate the role of (community/hospital/primary care/) pharmacists in [your local area] and to highlight some of the innovations and useful services that many people may not know are available through pharmacists. Your support will be invaluable in promoting new developments in delivering front line healthcare to a local audience.

*(Add more information about innovative practice here).*

I would welcome an opportunity to demonstrate the ways in which the profession has adapted and innovated in order to meet the needs of your constituents.

I look forward to welcoming you to [name] pharmacy.

Yours sincerely

Name  
MRPharm

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## Sample Press Release

*[Insert date]*

*[Insert heading. Your aim is to give enough information to get the journalist interested, so avoid tabloid style headlines!]*

### **MSP hears prescription for better health care – new service means better access to medicines**

*[Opening paragraph should summarise the story and give enough information to interest journalists]*

Local MSP *[Insert name here]* joined other community leaders today at a meeting to highlight a new local service whereby patients can access their NHS medication for minor ailments from the pharmacy. The meeting was organised by local pharmacist/s *[your name/organisation here]*, to promote the newly available service

*[Insert example of new or improved services, e.g. the minor ailments service at the pharmacy provides a highly convenient facility for local users and has significantly eased pressure on local GP services, by providing treatment for...]*

Pharmacist *[Insert your name here]* welcomed users and community leaders to a seminar to discuss the role of pharmacies in local health services:

*[Your name]* commented:

“I am delighted that xxx name of MSP/MSPs and other community leaders were able to participate in this important seminar, about how we can keep improving and expanding the quality and range of local health services. Pharmacy is making a major contribution to improving local healthcare, providing more convenient and accessible services, and helping the NHS and other local health services to meet local need.”

Local MSP *[Insert name]* said:

[e.g. “Pharmacists are at the front line of health service provision and they are often the first point of contact for people. I was really impressed by the ideas about how pharmacy can have a major role in improving public health and I will be raising these issues in the Scottish Parliament

[Note: You should give the MSP the opportunity to include a quote of their own making. And don't forget to let them see the final version of the release before it goes out!]

Ends

For further information please contact: *[Insert your contact details]*

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**Feedback**

The Scottish Office is keen to hear about local lobbying activity and to provide support and advice. If you are planning activity please let us know by e-mailing:

Lyndon Braddick, Director for Scotland, at: [lyndon.braddick@rpsgb.org](mailto:lyndon.braddick@rpsgb.org)

## Aide Memoir for Visits



### Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

This check list has been produced to act as an *aide memoir* for pharmacists when receiving a visit from members of the public, political figures and civil servants.

For many visitors this will be their first impression of how a pharmacy operates internally and will allow them to experience first hand how pharmacy functions on a day to day basis. The visit will give key opinion formers the opportunity to experience the contribution pharmacy makes to the healthcare of people in Scotland.

#### **Points to consider**

*Confidentiality* – Patient confidentiality must be considered at all times. When demonstrating processes within the pharmacy e.g. labelling it is advisable to set up a fictitious patient on PMR, prescriptions within the dispensary should have the patient's details covered.

*Health and safety* implications should be considered with more bodies in the working environment.

#### **Discussion points**

- The prescription journey through the pharmacy system
  - Working to standards and with SOP's
  - IT – what the dispensary computer is used for :PMR, labelling, checking for drug interactions, endorsing, ordering, interventions
  - The different legal category of medicines (POM, P, GSL, and CDs) and the level of supervision required for medicine sales.
  - POM to P switches
  - IT developments & the pharmaceutical care services contract
  - National PGD, direct referral and unscheduled care
  - Skill mix within the pharmacy : technicians- dispenser-pre-registration student-Accredited Checking technician – medicine counter assistants
  - Independent and supplementary prescribing
  - Patient safety- Recording of interventions, 'near misses' and complaints procedure
  - Additional services provide by the pharmacy e.g. nursing homes, collection and delivery of prescriptions
  - Provision of Monitored Dosage Systems
  - Investment in premises to provide consultation area/room
  - Provision of locally negotiated services such as supervised consumption of Methadone/Buprenorphine etc
  - Emergency hormonal contraception (EHC)
  - Return of unwanted medicines – disposal of waste
  - Provision of healthy living advice and opportunity for ad hoc interventions
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- The sale of medicines according to a protocol - using WHAM questioning

### ***Key Messages about Pharmacy***

#### ***Pharmacists are experts in medicines***

Pharmacists are the experts in medicines, providing information and advice to patients, colleagues and fellow professionals. They support patients in ensuring that they manage their medicine appropriately helping to reduce the incidence of adverse drug reactions

#### ***The pharmacy network***

Pharmacists work at the heart of healthcare in Scotland, using their unique understanding of medicines for the benefit of people in their local communities and in hospitals. Pharmacists also work in the pharmaceutical industry, helping create and deliver the medicines of tomorrow – and in academia, developing pharmacists of the future. As a vibrant, cross boundary profession, pharmacy acts as a network of support for patients as they access care in a variety of settings.

#### ***Pharmacy and the public health agenda***

*Pharmacists* are ideally placed to enable and provide patients with strategies to help themselves in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles or managing their long term condition. Pharmacists already provide advice on a daily basis to ensure that patients who are able and willing to treat themselves can *self-treat* and *self medicate* for *minor ailments*. Access to medication required for self care through minor ailment schemes increases the opportunities for self care.

#### ***Pharmacies are Community Walk in Healthy Living Centres***

Community pharmacy is easily accessible with up to half the population living within 500 metres of a pharmacy. Pharmacies are found where people live, work and shop, providing help and advice usually without the need for an appointment and are often available when other healthcare professionals are not.

#### ***Standards and Public Safety***

All pharmacists must be registered with RPSGB and must practice in accordance with RPSGB's Code of Ethics and professional standards guidelines. Pharmacy is a graduate profession with pharmacists registering after undergoing a four year Masters-level degree course and one year of pre-registration training. RPSGB Inspectors routinely visit community pharmacies to provide pharmacists with support in their practice and to ensure professional standards are met.

#### ***Pharmacy - an evolving profession***

Independent prescribing status for pharmacists will further develop the profession's ability to support patients with long term conditions, allowing pharmacists to prescribe for patients in hospital and community settings, providing flexibility and improved access to services.

If you require further information please contact:

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Tel No: 0131 556 4386    email: [scotinfo@rpsgb.org](mailto:scotinfo@rpsgb.org)

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