



White paper reforms filter down to front line

C+D finds the government is for the most part honouring its commitment to the pharmacy blueprint

Jennifer Richardson

Progress has been made on many areas of England's pharmacy white paper, one year after its publication heralded a "transformation" of the profession.

Although there are a few key missed deadlines, the government has fulfilled or is making steps towards many of the commitments it made in its blueprint for pharmacy, C+D has found.

The appointment of a community pharmacy tsar, plans to shake up pharmacy education, a summary care records access pilot, steps to strengthen PNAs and a national vascular screening programme are some of the targets that have been hit so far.

Major pharmacy bodies, including the NPA, PSNC, CCA and IPF agreed progress was being made. If there was little to show in terms of implementation, they said, much "preparatory" work and research was going on behind the scenes. "All of that's building the foundations for the next year going forward," said PSNC

head of information services Alastair Buxton.

But there was a need for a clearer "vision" of what policy would mean at the coalface, the NPA and CCA agreed.

The NPA called for three immediate commitments from the Department of Health that would have a tangible impact: a moratorium on 100-hour contract applications, guaranteed pharmacy leadership within the local and regional NHS, and investment in directed enhanced services (DES).

Lack of progress on DES – which will require PCTs to commission certain services, if needed, from pharmacy – is one of the most glaring missed targets. Discussions were due to begin last spring but have yet to get off the ground.

And control of entry points, along with financial ones, could cause white paper progress to take "one step forward and two steps backwards", warned IPF chairman Fin McCaul. "The white paper is a good idea but the current environment we're working in is not conducive to getting good results from it," he said.

Document on track, government says

"Good progress" is being made with the white paper, according to the Department of Health, despite some key deadlines appearing to have been missed. The DH continued to work closely with stakeholders and interested parties, a spokesperson said.

The DH had yet to deliver promised proposals to set up a national minor ailments scheme by spring 2009, and to work on directed enhanced services from spring 2008.

The spokesperson said the DH remained committed to these projects, but that they were subject to further discussions with NHS Employers and PSNC.

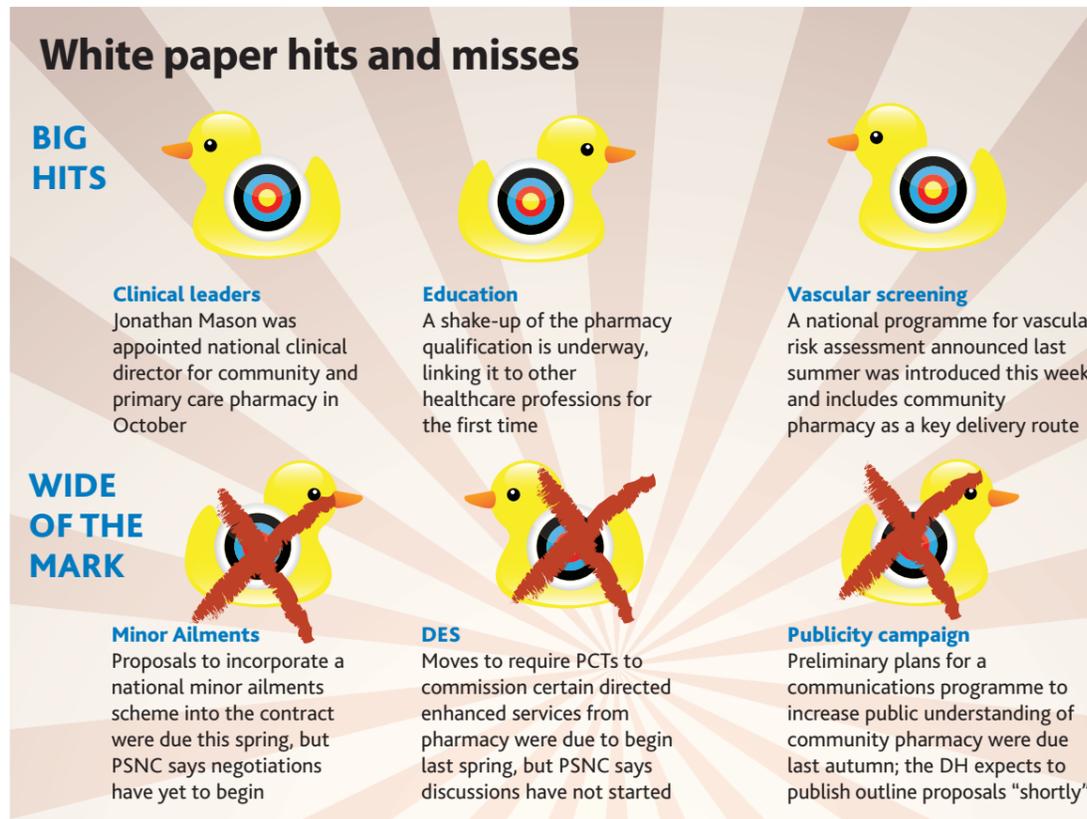
These two organisations have now presented proposals on

how MURs could be targeted to meet health needs, and funded to reward outcomes. The spokesperson said the Department was considering these plans.

The DH was also considering responses to the white paper consultation, which included matters such as 100-hour pharmacy contract applications, the spokesperson said.

Further details would be made "as soon as practicable", and the full report of the consultation published "in due course". **ZS**

Has white paper progress been good?
zsmeaton@cmpmedica.com



Pharmacy bodies remain united for white paper

Pharmacy bodies must continue working together to realise the opportunities offered by the white paper, the NPA has stated.

NPA chief executive John Turk said: "The main challenges and opportunities can only be grasped if all those with an interest in community pharmacy pull together."

Mr Turk said pharmacy bodies had been working together "to establish a profitable and sustainable future at the heart of the NHS".

"Over the past 12 months the CEOs of the main pharmacy bodies have been meeting frequently to keep up the momentum and a number of 'pan-pharmacy action teams' have formed, each concerned with practical

implementation," Mr Turk said.

PSNC head of regulation Steve Lutener confirmed the pharmacy bodies have "worked together on many things over quite a long time".

He said: "When we have a message that's pharmacy related and we have a common position we try and work collaboratively."

The NPA, RPSGB, PSNC, CCA and AIMp pledged to work together to implement the white paper in September 2008. The five groups have received the support of England's chief pharmaceutical officer Keith Ridge. **CC**

Are pharmacy bodies working together well?
cchapman@cmpmedica.com

100-hour rules should have been suspended

Industry analysts say the DH should have acted faster over exemptions

Zoe Smeaton

The Department of Health (DH) should have acted faster on control of entry regulations and banned new 100-hour pharmacy applications while it decided what to do with contract rules, industry analysts have said.

In last year's white paper, the Department set out several options to change the 100-hour exemption, including one to make new applicants justify the need for such a pharmacy. A consultation on the proposals ended in November last year, but the Department has yet to respond with a final decision.

David Reissner, of law firm Charles Russell, said indecision from the DH had caused uncertainty in the profession. And he warned that he was already seeing an increase in the number of applications for 100-hour pharmacies. In 2006-07 there were 270 new pharmacy openings, up from 146 in 2005-06 and just 42 the year before the exemption was introduced, according to NHS figures.

The DH should have imposed a

moratorium on the exemption until it made a decision, Paul Benson of Manchester LPC added. He said the opening of some 100-hour pharmacies had been unnecessary and diluted the quality of services.

Those responding to the consultation also generally argued that "100-hour pharmacies should only exist where there is a proven need for such a facility".

The DH's consultation also covered plans to replace the control of entry system with one based on pharmaceutical needs assessments. Respondents were "not convinced" by the proposal, but the DH has already published guidance on implementing PNAs for PCTs.

Publicity campaign runs late

A plan for the pharmacy PR campaign promised a year ago will be published "shortly", the Department of Health has said.

As part of the April 2008 white paper, the DH pledged a publicity campaign to highlight pharmacy services, and it committed to mapping a target audience by autumn 2008.

While a national campaign is yet to emerge, a DH spokesperson said the department "continued to make progress" and expected to publish an outline "shortly".

The news comes as an inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Primary Care and Public Health found not enough was being done to promote pharmacy services.

The inquiry recommended a campaign to raise public awareness and strengthen pharmacy's role in promoting public health.



These findings were supported by a straw poll conducted by C+D, which revealed some patients were not aware of the services a pharmacy can provide.

Several respondents recognised pharmacists could offer advice. One respondent listed cholesterol checks and diabetes testing as

pharmacy services. However, another thought a pharmacist was best described as a shopkeeper and sold health food. **CC**

Does pharmacy need better PR?
cchapman@cmpmedica.com

News in brief

Business rates rise cut

The Treasury has reduced April 1's business rates rise from 5 per cent to 2 per cent. The eleventh-hour climbdown by Chancellor Alistair Darling allows businesses to spread the remaining 3 per cent increase over the next two years. The announcement came a week after contractors warned the hike could cause pharmacy closures.

MBE pharmacist jailed

Pharmacist Hooman Ghalamkari MBE has been jailed for nine months for script fraud. Dr Ghalamkari pleaded guilty to false accounting while running two Worcester pharmacies between February 2005 and December 2006. Dr Ghalamkari has since repaid £27,000 to the NHS.

www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk

C+D Jobs top 500

There are now over 500 vacancies advertised on the C+D Jobs website. Major employers represented include Lloydspharmacy, Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Superdrug, Day Lewis and Numark. Those in need of career inspiration could check out the Job of the Week, currently a part-time pharmacy technician course teacher at South London College.

www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk/jobs

Change to ethics

The RSPGB has announced a change to its Code of Ethics standards. From April 1 pharmacists can deliver medicines to a designated person who is not the patient or their carer if consent has been given for a single occasion or set period of time.

Weekly price updates

C+D readers can receive weekly price updates, as well as accessing the C+D data site (www.cddata.co.uk) for free. The data site allows pharmacists to search by pip code, brand, product or manufacturer. To sign up to the weekly updates, email your name, address, job title and subscriber number to priceupdates@chemistanddruggist.co.uk