

News

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Health watchdog concern about impact of cuts to pharmacy funding

North Yorkshire's health watchdog has criticised funding cuts to community pharmacies as a "another blow to health services in the county".

At a specially convened meeting today of the County Council's Scrutiny of Health Committee, Jack Davies, Chief Executive Officer of the Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire, outlined the impact of the Government's programme of cuts to community pharmacy funding. This year, funding has already been cut by four per cent and next year will see a further reduction of 3.4 per cent with more cuts expected in following years.

There are 110 community pharmacies in North Yorkshire. In the first two years, the more remote pharmacies will be protected from the full effect of funding reductions but there is uncertainty about what level of protection will be in place in future.

Jack Davies, Chief Executive Officer of the Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire said: "These cuts have been imposed by the Government without listening to the concerns of pharmacists. The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee unanimously rejected the package on 14th October 2016 but the Government pressed on regardless."

At this stage, there are no planned closures of community pharmacies but the services that they provide are likely to change, as funding is reduced. Concerns have been raised that some community pharmacies will have to:

- Reduce opening hours and staffing levels
- End free services, such as the home delivery of medicines
- Reduce investment in facilities and services
- Reduce stock held on the premises, with the result that people may not be able to get the medicine they need then and there.

There is also likely to be an impact upon GPs and A&E as patients who would have previously used their community pharmacy end up being forced to go elsewhere.

Jack Davies said: "There are real concerns that from April 2018, when the Pharmacy Access Scheme ends and all community pharmacies feel the full force of the programme of cuts, pharmacies in the more rural and sparsely populated areas will be at risk."

Cllr Clark added: "This is another blow to health services in the county. Yes, NHS funding is limited and changes to need to be made to the way in which health services are delivered but the funding cuts just don't make sense. The message from the NHS has consistently been for people to use their community pharmacy for a wide range of minor ailments, support and health screening. In

this way the pressure could be taken off GPs and A&E departments. Now it seems that this policy has been reversed.”

The NHS nationally will have an estimated deficit of £30 billion by 2020/21, if nothing is done to reduce the demand for hospital services and find new ways of providing care in the community that is preventative and targeted.

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Committee chairman: County Councillor Jim Clark, 01423 872822

Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire (LPC): Jack Davies, Chief Executive Officer, 01482 840749 or 07813 135433

Notes to editor

On 20th October 2016 the Government imposed a two-year funding package on community pharmacy, with a £113 million reduction in funding in 2016/17.

This will take total funding to £2.687 billion for 2016/17. This is a reduction of 4% compared with last year, but it will mean that contractors will see their funding for December 2016 to March 2017 fall by an average of 12% compared with current levels. This will be followed by a reduction in 2017/18 to £2.592 billion for the financial year, which will see funding levels from April 2017 drop by around 7.5% compared with current levels.