Written evidence from National Pharmacy Association

Huw Yardley

Health and Social Care Committee

House of Commons

London

April 18th, 2019

Dear Mr Yardley,

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Pharmacy Association (NPA) to respond to the Health and Social Care Committee’s inquiry into the health consequences of illicit drugs policy.

The NPA represents the vast majority of independent community pharmacy owners in the UK. In addition to being a representative voice, we provide members with a range of professional services to help them maintain and improve the health of the communities they serve.

Community pharmacies and their teams work closely with local authorities to deliver a wide range of public health services that help reduce the local population's dependence on GP practices, hospitals, and social care.

Community pharmacists are medicines experts. Their expertise covers support strategies for users of illicit drugs. A number of local authorities have drawn on this, commissioning community pharmacy—based needle and syringe programmes (NSPs), exchange services, and supervised consumption services.

A 2016 analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) highlighted the broader social impact of community pharmacy—delivered NSPs. These programmes reduce the cost to the NHS of providing NSP services when delivered through channels such as mobile and outreach clinics that can reach underserved demographics; decrease the
prevalence of blood—borne viruses (BBVs) by reducing the incidence of transmission; and facilitate the safe disposal of injecting equipment.

Another effective mechanism for minimising harms from illicit drug usage is supervised consumption (SC).

SC of a substitute treatment such as methadone is the most common treatment for people who use heroin or similar drugs. PwC's analysis found that, when successful, this intervention leads to reduced drug consumption, with users committing fewer crimes and reporting improvements in well-being. In 2015 alone, such outcomes contributed an estimated £2.1 billion to wider society.

The NPA therefore urges the Committee to recognise the value of community pharmacy in curbing harms from illicit drugs usage and increasing recovery rates amongst users with dependency issues.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this response further. To do so, please contact Helga Mangion at independentsvoice@npa.co.uk.

Kind Regards,

Helga Mangion MRPharmS FRSPH

Policy Manager

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