

PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING



Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society
of Great Britain

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales.

Department of Health White Paper Trust, Assurance and Safety The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century What it means for the Pharmacy Profession

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. It also regulates pharmacy technicians on a voluntary basis, which is expected to become statutory under anticipated regulation. The primary objectives of the RPSGB are to lead, regulate, develop and represent the profession of pharmacy.

The RPSGB undertakes an active Parliamentary programme and regularly meet and brief thinkers and opinion formers in health policy. Pharmacists look to Members of Parliament to continue to support the profession's key role on the front line of the NHS and to address the other areas outlined below.

The RPSGB hopes that Parliamentarians will find this briefing of value as a way of gaining an understanding of the significant changes that this White Paper proposes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The White Paper has set out a programme of reform to the UK's system for the regulation of health professionals, based on consultation on the two reviews published in July 2006: *Good doctors, safer patients* (Donaldson review) and *The regulation of non-medical healthcare professions* (Foster review). The principles in the proposals depart fundamentally from those recommended in the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry (Kennedy Report) of 2002 upon which the RPSGB's recently revised Royal Charter was based. However, the RPSGB recognises the change of policy and the political will of the Government and supports the direction of travel.

Proposals in the White Paper will have a particularly significant impact on the RPSGB because unlike most of the other professional regulators, it has an integrated regulatory and professional role. The White Paper proposes that the RPSGB separates its regulatory system from its system of professional leadership and that a new General Pharmaceutical Council (GPC) is established to regulate the profession. It is also proposed that 'a body akin to a Royal College' be established to provide leadership.

The RPSGB is working closely with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and other pharmacy bodies to help to create a new professional body for the pharmacy profession.

The RPSGB will be making strong representations to Government and Parliament to ensure that:

- any new arrangements result in both improved patient safety and stronger representation for the professional role of pharmacists;
- any transition is properly managed and resourced, and that there is no increased risk to patients or the profession;
- sustainable funding arrangements are in place for the long-term to support both the regulation and professional leadership functions;
- the pharmacy profession and key stakeholders, including the dedicated staff of the RPSGB, are fully consulted and informed about the process of change;
- there is a commitment to strong and transparent governance arrangements for both the regulation and professional leadership of pharmacy;
- whilst recognising that the formation of the GPC should be led by the Government, the formation of 'a body akin to a Royal College' should be led by the profession.

About the RPSGB

Founded in 1841, the RPSGB is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales.

Today, the RPSGB leads and supports the development of the profession within the context of the public benefit. This includes the advancement of science, practice, education and knowledge in pharmacy. In addition, it promotes the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums.

Despite regular demonstration of the ability of the RPSGB to act as a strong and effective regulator, and a regular clean bill of health from the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE), the removal of the RPSGB regulatory functions is insisted upon by the Government in this White Paper.

The White Paper requires the separation of regulation from the RPSGB's role of professional leadership. The RPSGB's Statutory Committee is entirely independent of the RPSGB Council and has an independent and legally qualified Chair, currently Lord Fraser of Carmyllie. The Statutory Committee of the RPSGB was established under Section 7 of the Pharmacy Act 1954. In accordance with Section 8 of that Act, the Statutory Committee considers any convictions received by, or allegations of misconduct made against, a pharmacist or a person applying for registration with the RPSGB. The Pharmacy Act has now been repealed and replaced by the Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Order 2007, which maintains this separation of functions.

DIVISION OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE RPSGB

The White Paper states that the RPSGB's dual responsibilities are (potentially) in conflict with its role as an independent regulator for the profession itself.

The Government will therefore seek legislative time to bring proposals to Parliament to enable it to establish a General Pharmaceutical Council (GPC) responsible for the regulation of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, and for the registration of pharmacy premises. It will also exercise the role of inspection of pharmacies currently carried out by the RPSGB.

The White Paper also suggests 'a body akin to a Royal College' be established to fulfill the professional leadership role for pharmacy.

The proposed GPC and the professional body are two sides of the same coin as they work together to raise standards. The regulatory role, through the GPC, serves and protects the public. The professional body can support the profession while maintaining the public's confidence in pharmacy. It will be crucial to the future development of the pharmacy profession that there is effective working and communication between the two bodies particularly around:

- the development of standards of practice and performance;
- the development of standards of education and training;
- support for CPD, including facilitation, reviews and continuing education/ skills development;
- support for revalidation and recertification.

Establishing a professional body to support the pharmacy profession and raise standards to benefit the public

The pharmacy profession will need a strong clear voice to assume the critical responsibility of a role of a professional body. The RPSGB believes that the success of the future body will depend upon making best use of available resources and infrastructure thereby creating a body with a clear focus on its members' needs, but with a stream of funding which will ensure it is financially sustainable.

The RPSGB intends to support the profession to become more innovative, more ambitious, stronger and more confident. To achieve its wishes the profession will need robust and appropriate support structures at both local and national level.

The RPSGB is already working closely with the PSNI and around two hundred other pharmacy bodies in order to begin talking – and listening – to them and to explore the possible principles and functions of a professional body. This work is not new, and was in hand prior to the publication of the White Paper.

Establishing a General Pharmaceutical Council

In January, the Government set up a short-term working party, led by Lord Carter of Coles, which included the RPSGB and other stakeholders, the remit was to develop a robust, deliverable, cost effective plan for the establishment of the GPC. The Carter working party completed its review in April and Lord Carter's report has recently been published. The RPSGB is now considering its response to the report. The Government response is expected in June.

The GPC should encompass:

- the functions, powers and duties relating to the professional regulation of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians as set out in the *Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Order 2007*;
- the RPSGB's broader regulatory and statutory enforcement functions relating to corporate bodies, pharmacy premises and medicines;
- the entirety of the RPSGB's statutory responsibilities, as set in other legislation;
- further regulatory functions stemming from the White Paper proposals, in particular relating to the revalidation of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

For further information

The RPSGB would welcome the opportunity to discuss with Parliamentarians the impact of the White Paper on pharmacy, and we would be delighted to meet with you at your convenience. The White Paper has suggested significant changes, and we would be grateful for your interest in this important area of policy which will impact directly on patients and the public. We would be pleased to provide further information on request.



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This briefing has been produced by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB), the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists.

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