

# Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland

## Building a Professional Forum for Pharmacy in Northern Ireland

### Results of Consultation Process – September 2009

#### 1. Introduction

The Pharmaceutical profession in Northern Ireland is a substantial body reflected in the membership of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland which numbers approximately 2,100 members. The profession operates in the context of Health responsibilities which are fully devolved to the NI Assembly. Against the backdrop of the White Paper, Trust Assurance and Safety and the need to clearly differentiate between regulatory and leadership roles, the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland has identified the need to establish a Professional Forum to provide a focus for Pharmaceutical professionals in Northern Ireland and meet a range of non-regulatory requirements of the profession.

The creation of a Professional Forum was originally proposed in the submission to the Health Minister “The future of Pharmacy Registration, Regulation and Representation in NI” and further supported by a majority of respondents in the fees consultation 2009/2010.

In order to detail the role and potential arrangements for this Professional Forum, as a basis for a consultation with the professional membership, the Council established a project. The work of the project has been undertaken by an independent external consultant, Tony Lake of Lake Consulting Ltd. Inputs from a reference group of members and other stakeholders from across the profession were obtained to assemble a consultation document and supporting consultation questionnaire. Following approval by Council the consultation was run with members over a 6 week period concluding September to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009. The results have been analysed independently by Tony Lake and the results are presented in this document.

## 2. Response Profile

Respondents made their responses using a questionnaire designed to test acceptance of the proposed model for the Professional Forum and key options related to implementation. A copy of this questionnaire is included as attachment A. Respondents were offered the option of a postal response directly to the independent consultant or response via a confidential web based option. Some 78 respondents chose the web based option with the remainder opting for a mailed response. The response profile was as follows:

A total of some 103 responses were received. These were spread across the professional member groupings with Pharmaceutical Society for Northern Ireland as follows:

Professional group	Total Number of Responses
Pharmacy - National Company	17
Pharmacy - Independent (Employee)	9
Pharmacy - Independent (Proprietor)	21
Hospital	27
Education	7
Professional/Representative Body	1
Other/Not Classified	15
Pre-registration	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>

## 3. Analysis of Responses

The analysis of the responses provided are shown in the following sections, grouped by the areas covered by the consultation questionnaire

### 3.1 Support for the approach outlined for a Professional Forum (Questionnaire Question 1)

Do you believe the approach outlined to the Professional Forum provides a means of ensuring the profession in Northern Ireland can influence developments, in our local context?

Responses to this question are shown by professional grouping and for the complete respondent group

Professional group	% "Yes"
Pharmacy - National Company	100%
Pharmacy - Independent (Employee)	100%
Pharmacy - Independent (Proprietor)	71%
Hospital	41%
Education	71%
Professional/Representative Body	100%
Other/Not Classified	67%
Pre-registration	100%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>72%</b>

### 3.2 Views on core functions and key service areas (Questionnaire Questions 2 and 3)

	% "Yes"
2. For the two core functions of the Professional Forum identified below, please indicate that you agree with and or understand that they are important for the professional Forum to fulfil?	
a) Advice to Pharmaceutical Society for Northern Ireland Council on regulatory matters affecting the profession, particularly in relation to public safety.	<b>91%</b>
b) Provision of Professional Leadership allied to regulation	<b>78%</b>
3. For the services to the Professional Members identified, please indicate if you believe they should be part of the range offered by the Professional Forum to members at the various stages in their career (for detail under each heading please see main consultation document)?	
a) Ensure that the profession in Northern Ireland has a co-ordinated voice	<b>84%</b>
b) Education, professional development and best practice	<b>79%</b>
c) Maintain and develop professional linkages outside NI	<b>73%</b>
d) Support for members - Oversee Benevolent Fund activities and develop other support services (NCAS etc)	<b>71%</b>

### 3.3 Views on Professional Forum Composition (Questionnaire Questions 4 and 5)

	% "Yes"
4. Do you agree that a mix of assigned places and elected members provides a good basis for Forum composition?	<b>81%</b>
5. The following groups have been identified as representative groups that could be assigned places on the Forum, would you support their appointment to the Forum?	
ULSTER CHEMIST'S ASSOCIATION	<b>69%</b>
GUILD OF HEALTHCARE PHARMACISTS	<b>74%</b>
PHARMACEUTICAL CONTRACTORS COMMITTEE	<b>71%</b>

In addition respondents were asked if there were any other representative groups which should have assigned places. Some 36 respondents (35% of all respondents) made suggestions in this area. Those most frequently mentioned in responses are shown below, ranked by frequency of mention.

<b>Group</b> (note that roles mentioned do not all have clear representative groups)	<b>% of respondent group suggesting</b>
University representative	12%
Community Pharmacists	6%
Hospital Pharmacists	5%
Employee Pharmacists (especially those without GHC access)	5%
Pharmacy education providers	4%
NICPLD	4%
Pharmacist Defence Association (or other legal expertise)	4%
Pharmacy Technician	3%
Prescribing Advisor	3%
Locum pharmacists	3%
Junior pharmacists (less than 30 yrs old)	3%
Industry	3%

It should be noted that the proportion showing support for the 3 representative groups specified is far higher than these additional suggested groups. However the list above merits consideration, consistent with the overall objectives to keep the size of the Professional Forum as small as possible.

### **3.4 Views on Governance Options (Questionnaire Questions 6 and 7)**

		<b>% "Yes"</b>
<b>6. Do you favour postal ballot or AGM vote as a process for electing members for the elected places in the future?</b>	<b>Postal Ballot</b>	<b>83%</b>
	<b>AGM</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>7. Do you agree that co-option is appropriate to achieve the right mix of pre-defined skills?</b>		<b>76%</b>

### 3.5 Views on options for the handling of the registration/retention fee beyond the 3 year plan (Questionnaire Question 8)

8. Which of the following options for handling the registration/retention fee would be acceptable to you going beyond the 3 year plan for the Professional Forum?	% "Yes"
a) Continue the method as defined in this consultation document i.e. no specific subscription fee for the Forum, with activities funded from payment for services from membership and regulator as appropriate	45%
b) Reduce the registration/retention fee by an amount equivalent to a voluntary Professional Forum membership fee i.e. the combined cost of compulsory registration fee and voluntary subscription to the Forum is the same as the current registration fee	45%
c) Reduce the registration/retention fee by an amount equal to all non-regulatory costs with a voluntary Professional Forum membership fee set by the Professional Forum to reflect the functions and services provided to professional members i.e. the combined costs are not fixed at the level of the current registration fee	18%

Many respondents to this question marked only one "yes" although they were asked to indicate all options that might prove acceptable. It is possible that many responded on the basis of choosing one preferred option.

### 3.6 Comments from individual respondents

Respondents were offered the option of amplifying their responses with comments. Some 52 respondents (50%) took the trouble to add information in this section. It is clear that comments will in the main be made by those with specific concerns. The comments below should therefore be read in the context of the 72% overall support by respondents for the Professional Forum proposal.

Main themes in these responses are summarised below.

- Establishment of the Professional Forum is seen as a positive move and essential for the development of profession in NI
- The appointment of the Forum Manager will be critical to its success
- There is some concern that the plan will be difficult to deliver with a part time Forum Manager
- Building links with other organisations were seen as important
- Some expressed a preference for seeking a solution through joining with the GB arrangements, whilst others felt building linkages with GB arrangements from within the proposed structure would be desirable
- Care is needed to avoid overlap and duplication with other bodies
- Some confusion was expressed regarding respective roles of the Professional Forum and NICPLD
- Concerns were expressed regarding representation provided for the Hospital sector
- A better voice is needed for Community Pharmacists
- Some felt that the questionnaire should have offered more options
- Some emphasised the importance of the Forum "having teeth" and not being dominated by the Council
- Concerns were expressed by some that funding proposals may be unrealistic
- Concerns were also expressed that individual member costs should not go up

#### **4. Input from Representative Bodies**

A number of representative bodies also made submissions in response to the consultation. Inputs were provided by:

- Ulster Chemists Association
- Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists
- Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development
- Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee (NI) Ltd
- National Pharmacy Association

These responses were thoughtful and comprehensive in their scope and represent a valuable contribution to the process. Themes from the individual member responses are to a large extent reflected in these responses. Rather than attempt to summarise each of these responses individually, the themes emerging from the range of responses are summarised below:

##### **Recognition of the need for change**

- The need for change to respond to the White paper and the need for stronger pharmacist representation are both recognised
- The task of providing a coordinated voice for pharmacy in Northern Ireland was seen as important

##### **In terms of emphasis needed in new arrangements, points made included:**

- A suitable level of distance and independence must be achieved by the representative body from Council
- Care must be taken to build linkages with other organisations
- Forum composition should be a mixture of assigned and elected places to ensure representative balance
- The representation of Community Pharmacists must be given stronger attention

##### **Specific concerns expressed included:**

- Care would be needed to ensure that new arrangements did not create overlaps or added complexity
- The financial viability of the Professional Form was seen as risk area
- There was concern about a potential increase in costs
- It was felt important that members should be assured of no increase in their costs
- Some concern was expressed that the programme outlined may not be deliverable with the resources identified, especially a part time Manager
- Some would also have liked to see a fuller evaluation of a range of options presented

In an attempt to provide an overall characterisation of the responses, NICPLD appears to be broadly opposed to the proposal whilst the remaining organisations see the proposal as at least one potential option, whilst expressing varying degrees of reservations, as reflected in the above list

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis of the responses to the consultation laid out in the previous sections leads the following conclusions

- The proposal for a Professional Forum received relatively strong support from the overall respondent group (72% in favour)
- All professional groupings within the overall group indicated in favour with the exception of the Hospital respondents (41% in favour) – this should be viewed as an indicator that the needs of this group will need careful attention in future arrangements
- The core functions and services proposed for the Professional Forum in the consultation document all received relatively strong support (ranging from 71% to 91% favour)
- A strong majority felt that a mixture of assigned places and elected members was appropriate in the make-up of the Professional Forum. Assigned places for Ulster Chemists Association, Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists and Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee also commanded clear support (ranging from 69% to 74% of respondents)
- Other groups were also identified by respondents for whom assigned places may be valid. Although generally the % proposing these were relatively small, the most frequently mentioned were, a University representative, community pharmacists, hospital pharmacists and employee pharmacists. Consideration should be given to these groups and ensuring their representation within the Professional Forum
- A strong majority was in favour of postal ballot (or an electronic equivalent) for elections to a Professional Forum rather than via Annual General Meeting
- Amongst the options considered for the handling of the registration/retention fee beyond the 3 year plan those more strongly favoured included no specific subscription fee for the Profession Forum or the reduction of the registration fee/retention fee by an amount equivalent to a voluntary Professional Forum membership fee. Whilst this area is clearly one of concern to members from comments made, no change is anticipated during the 3 year plan. It would however clearly be helpful to clarify future intentions at an early stage in the life of a new body

Based upon the comments and inputs from both individual respondents and representative bodies, some areas are clearly important for securing the success of any new body. These include:

- The recruitment of a suitably high calibre PF Manager at the earliest possible stage
- High priority given to building links with other organisations both within Northern Ireland and GB
- High priority given to ensuring that the needs and interests of groups which currently feel under represented including hospital and community pharmacists

Beyond this the value of a Professional Forum can only be demonstrated in practice so the rapid ramp up of the programme, some “quick wins”, maintaining visibility of activity with members but above all listening to them will be vital.

It is clear that the status quo and doing nothing is not an option. Change is therefore necessary and this is never easy. Finding a solution that meets a wide range of needs is always a challenge. The proposal made for a Professional Forum, from the results of the consultation, clearly commands a good level of support from amongst the responding membership and therefore provides a basis for proceeding. As with any new organisation, adjustment and fine tuning will be a feature in its initial phase. The inclusive approach the Professional Forum composition provides for should enable the concerns expressed to be addressed.

**Pharmaceutical Society for Northern Ireland - Professional Forum - Consultation Questionnaire**

Information provided will be held confidentially by the consultant and will not be attributable to individuals

Registration Number:

Pin Code:

This questionnaire seeks to obtain the views of the wider Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland membership on how best to establish the Professional Forum. The results will be analysed by our independent consultant and used by Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland Council to set the priorities for the next stage in the process. The questionnaire should be completed after reading the Consultation Document which provides the background to the questions

To enable us to interpret the responses from the membership in the light of professional and sectoral background can you please indicate which of the following best describes your own organisation and role. Tick one box only.

Pharmacy – national company	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pharmacy – independent (employee)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pharmacy – independent (proprietor)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional/ Representative Body	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other: please specify:.....

1. Do you believe the approach outlined to the Professional Forum provides a means of ensuring the profession in Northern Ireland can influence developments, in our local context? <i>Please circle your selected answer</i>	Yes	No
2. For the two core functions of the Professional Forum identified below, please indicate that you agree with and or understand that they are important for the professional Forum to fulfil?		
• Advice to Pharmaceutical Society for Northern Ireland Council on regulatory matters affecting the profession, particularly in relation to public safety. <i>Please circle your selected answer</i>	Yes	No
• Provision of Professional Leadership allied to regulation <i>Please circle your selected answer</i>	Yes	No
3. For the services to the Professional Members identified, please indicate if you believe they should be part of the range offered by the Professional Forum to members at the various stages in their career (for detail under each heading please see main consultation document)?		
<b>ENSURE THAT THE PROFESSION IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAS A CO-ORDINATED VOICE</b>	Yes	No
<b>EDUCATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND BEST PRACTICE</b>	Yes	No
<b>MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL LINKAGES OUTSIDE NI</b>	Yes	No
<b>SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS</b> - Oversee Benevolent Fund activities and develop other support services (NCAS etc)	Yes	No
5. Do you agree that a mix of assigned places and elected members provides a good basis for Forum composition? <i>Please circle your selected answer</i>	Yes	No
6. The following groups have been identified as representative groups that could be <b>assigned places on the Forum, would you support their appointment to the Forum?</b>		
<b>ULSTER CHEMIST'S ASSOCIATION</b>	Yes	No
<b>GUILD OF HEALTHCARE PHARMACISTS</b>	Yes	No
<b>PHARMACEUTICAL CONTRACTORS COMMITTEE</b>	Yes	No
<b>5.a Are there any other representative groups that you think should have assigned places? Please list below any suggestions, to a total maximum of five assigned places.</b>		

7. Do you favour postal ballot or AGM as a process for electing members for the elected places? <i>Please circle your selected answer</i>	<b>Postal Ballot</b>	<b>AGM</b>
8. Do you agree that co-option is appropriate to achieve the right mix of pre-defined skills. <i>Please circle your selected answer</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
9. Which of the following options for handling the registration/retention fee would be acceptable to you going beyond the 3 year plan for the Professional Forum? – <i>please tick below <b>all</b> that would be acceptable</i>		
a. Continue the method as defined in this consultation document i.e. no specific subscription fee for the Forum, with activities funded from payment for services from membership and regulator as appropriate		
b. Reduce the registration/retention fee by an amount equivalent to a voluntary Professional Forum membership fee i.e. the combined cost of compulsory registration fee and voluntary subscription to the Forum is the same as the current registration fee		
c. Reduce the registration/retention fee by an amount equal to all non-regulatory costs with a voluntary Professional Forum membership fee set by the Professional Forum to reflect the functions and services provided to professional members i.e. the combined costs are not fixed at the level of the current registration fee		

Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for your input.

You can either visit <http://www.psni.org.uk/professionals/current-consultations.php> and log on using your registration number and pin code or when complete post your questionnaire to: Tony Lake, Lake Consulting Ltd, 14 Dows Road, Belfast BT8 8LB by 12 noon on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009.