

Pharmaceutical Society NI
Annual Meeting
Thursday 15 October 2015

Chief Executive's Statement
Mr Trevor Patterson

May I add my welcome to all of you this evening and thank you for your interest in our work.

June 2014 to May 2015 has been a very busy year – we were particularly pleased to have completed the groundwork to remove the threat of prosecution for dispensing errors in specified circumstances and anticipate the necessary legislation coming into operation before the end of this calendar year.

We recognise the difficulty that the threat of prosecution poses when seeking candour and consider the solution we have arrived at fair to both the profession and the public

It is critically important that, with this threat removed, pharmacists are able to learn from their own and other errors - this change is designed to improve error reporting to help minimise the possibility of a repeat of the same mistake – indeed the improved reporting of near misses could help eliminate some errors completely.

There will be local engagement with the profession to address how this will be achieved, it is not envisaged that the regulator will be the recipient of these reports.

We have also done the groundwork on the introduction of output based Standards for registered pharmacies. Both of these projects have been completed within the UK wide Rebalancing Pharmacy Legislation and Professional Regulation remit – this initiative is designed to reduce the

burden of regulation, enabling innovation and professional development which will show benefits to patients and professionals alike.

Financially we maintained fees at 2009 levels throughout the period of significant transition between 2012 and now – we did this by prudent investments of reserves to reduce operating costs, including investments in IT which, for example, enabled registrants to complete retention on-line for the first time this year, by working with regulatory partners to share costs and facilities and by careful management of budgets through accurate forecasting.

It is therefore all the more regrettable that as part of our fees review in 2014/2015 we uncovered anomalies in our statutory fee structure going back 20 years – despite routinely consulting on changes to fees, the publication of those fees on our website and our complete transparency in the processes we used, we were very disappointed to discover anomalies between these fees and those in statute.

In the short term we are about to consult on an interim fix which will bring the main fees that we charge into line with the proposals we made in our 2014 consultation – the complexity and lack of flexibility of the existing structure prevents us from aligning all previously charged fees in an effective and efficient manner without primary legislative reform and we will suspend charging of some administrative fees in the short term.

We are committed to working with the Department to radically overhaul the fee charging structures with a view to creating an open, transparent, easily understandable and flexible fee regime – that does not mean increasing our fees beyond the level already consulted upon, nor increasing the number of fees beyond that previously charged. We wish to re-instate the financial model we consulted on in 2014, charging only what we need to in order to deliver our statutory obligations.

We anticipate the launch of our new Code of Conduct in early 2016, we have been engaged in pre-consultation and formal consultation during the year and the document is now in near final form.

Looking forward, we will shortly consult on Guidance for language testing with the imminent introduction of the so-called professional passport, permitting professionals across Europe to practice in states other than their own – after many years we are very pleased to have been given confirmation that the Government will introduce powers to language test EU applicants in certain circumstances, a reversal of the previous prohibition on such tests, and our consultation will seek your views on our guidance around how we apply this power.

The Rebalancing programme will next look at Responsible Pharmacist and Superintendent Standards as well as the introduction to a defence from prosecution for dispensing errors for hospital pharmacists. We will be seeking your views on the shape and content of the Responsible Pharmacist and Superintendent Pharmacists Standards as they move from Ministerial to professional regulatory Standards into 2016.

Also in 2016 we will be starting the conversation on the content of the Registered Pharmacy Standards mentioned earlier – we really want to hear the views of pharmacists and others about suitable standards to protect patients and the reputation of pharmacy whilst assisting innovation and development.

It has not been possible in the short time available to outline all that we have achieved; you can access our full Annual Report on our website or by request to our office to get fuller details.

I would encourage you to engage with us on the many pieces of work we have planned in the current and coming year, giving us your views and the benefit of your knowledge and experience to help us shape a regulatory framework that will protect patients and allow you to take your profession forward for many years to come.

Thank you again for attending tonight