



Community Pharmacy Wales
Fferylliaeth Gymunedol Cymru

Evidence to the National Assembly
Enterprise and Business Committee
Inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration

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Part 1:
Introduction

- 1.1 This evidence is submitted by Community Pharmacy Wales (CPW) to the Assembly Enterprise and Business Committee as a contribution to their inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration.
- 1.2 CPW is recognised in the National Health Services (Wales) Act 2006 and by the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Health & Social Services as the only organisation responsible for representing all of the 708 community pharmacies in Wales on all matters relating to NHS pharmacy services.
- 1.3 Community Pharmacy Wales is the only organisation that represents every community pharmacy in Wales. It works with Government and its agencies, such as local Health Boards, to help protect and develop high quality community pharmacy services and to shape the NHS community pharmacy contract and its associated regulations in order to achieve the highest standards of public health and the best possible patient outcomes.
- 1.4 CPW is the only organisation in Wales all of whose members are retailers in Wales.
- 1.5 By far the majority of these community pharmacies are located in town centres or the main high street of their village, town or city. CPW is, therefore, pleased to take the opportunity to contribute to this particular inquiry.

- 1.6 Community pharmacies across Wales provide essential and much valued health and social care services in the heart of local communities, including in rural communities, urban deprived areas and large metropolitan centres. It is estimated that more than 50,000 visits are made every day to the more than 700 community pharmacies across Wales. Community pharmacies are open six, often seven, days a week including outside the 9am to 5pm period. Most pharmacies have consultation rooms to ensure patient confidentiality. The services are provided, without the need for an appointment, by fully-qualified professionals, in convenient locations in town centres where people are go about their normal daily lives including shopping or working. Community pharmacies are, in effect, Wales' town centre healthcare centres.

Part 2:

Community Pharmacy contribution to issues raised in Committee's Inquiry

- 2.1 The Committee has a 3-pronged remit in its terms of reference for the inquiry and CPW here outlines the contribution that community pharmacy, and those who commission community pharmacy services, can make to each.
- 2.2 Part 1: *"What approaches have been followed to successfully deliver and finance the regeneration of town centres in Wales? Are there lessons to be learned from elsewhere?"*
- 2.3 The main approaches in Wales on town centre regeneration are based in local government or in the 7 Strategic Partnership Areas set up by the Welsh Government. In the planning documents and business plans of some of these

there are references to reducing health inequalities and sometimes references to fostering the local retail sector or the local business sector.

2.4 CPW is not aware of any acknowledgement of the unique role of community pharmacy in delivering health services in accessible ways in the heart of the town centres. The financing of community pharmacy and the financing of town centre regeneration is more dependent on each other than official financing mechanisms currently recognise.

2.5 *Part 2: How does the Welsh Government use the levers at its disposal to assist in the regeneration of town centres in Wales?*

2.6 There are various ways in which the Welsh Government uses the levers at its disposal to assist in town centre regeneration. Included in these levers should be the health policies of the Government that support community pharmacy. The more health services are moved from secondary care into the community and into community pharmacy in particular, the more footfall into local pharmacies will increase. This carries consequential benefits to the surrounding shops and other town centre facilities and activities.

2.7 A good example of this is the first all-Wales public health campaign through community pharmacy that was run in July 2011. This involved a proactive press and publicity campaign encouraging visits to the town centres of Wales in order to visit the pharmacy and take a free test on the person's risk score for type 2 diabetes. As a result of this 24,000 people visited their pharmacy to get the tests.

2.8 CPW are currently in discussions with Welsh Government officials with a view to the success of this campaign being repeated with further all-Wales public health campaigns through community pharmacy backed by Public

Health Wales. This government lever would also serve to support town centre regeneration.

- 2.9 The current Welsh Government was elected on a manifesto which includes a commitment to the provision of NHS free health checks for all those over 50 years of age. If community pharmacies are one of the NHS providers of these health checks, as envisaged in the manifesto, then this will also act as a driver of footfall to the town centre pharmacies which will also benefit the town centre as a whole.
- 2.10 Part 3: *“How are the interests and activities of communities, businesses, local authorities and Welsh Ministers identified and coordinated when developing and implementing town centre regeneration projects?”*
- 2.11 CPW is not aware of any attempt to incorporate the interests and activities of community pharmacy in either developing or implementing town centre regeneration projects. CPW believes this is short sighted by those responsible for town centre regeneration. We hope that this Assembly Committee Inquiry will draw attention to the potential for community pharmacies being of prime benefit to town centres, their sustainability and their regeneration.
- 2.12 One major omission on the part of the Welsh Government is lack of support for the retail sector of the Welsh economy. There is no Retail Sector Forum and there is no team of Government officials with responsibility for, and expertise in, the retail sector. One result of this has been the ill-informed compulsory charge on single use carrier bags. There appear to have been more Welsh Government officials working on this one proposal than on the whole of community pharmacy or the whole of the retail sector. However, these officials were from the environment department and have no

knowledge of the way the retail sector operates, whether in community pharmacies or other retail outlets. The result has been not only effectively a tax on town centres and on shopping in Wales, but also a tax on high street healthcare. It is yet to be seen what effect the so called bag tax will have on Welsh town centres, but it obviously makes them less competitive when compared with town centres across the border.

2.13 CPW has made extensive recommendations elsewhere on effective alternatives to the so called bag tax and we have repeated these, where appropriate, in our recommendations to this Committee.

2.14 The Committee also seeks views on 8 particular issues and CPW outlines here a number of ways in which community pharmacies can support the success and sustainability of town centres and also actions that can be taken by town centres to recognise the important role of their local pharmacy.

2.15 The Committee queries *"The roles the Welsh Government and local authorities play in the regeneration of town centres"*.

2.16 As outlined above, one role that the Welsh Government can play in town centre regeneration is to support and expand the work of community pharmacy.

2.17 One role that local, as opposed to central, government can play in town centre regeneration is to commission relevant social care services from community pharmacies in order to assist support, especially for older people in the community, and to support the local town centre base for such services. Community pharmacies are heavily involved in social **care** in all locations, yet community pharmacy is very rarely included as a partner in local government strategies and funding of social **services**.

2.18 CPW have previously proposed to the Welsh Assembly Government that community pharmacy's potential role in social services is significant and is currently under used, because community pharmacy is: an important resource in the effective management of medicines both in the community and in care homes; a lifeline for vulnerable patients in hard to reach communities; a source of expertise, advice and equipment to support independent living; a resource to reduce the likelihood of falls in older people; a critical player in reducing the impact of drug misuse on local communities; a key resource reducing the impact of unplanned teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections; is in a strong position to signpost people to other social care support services and is a strong and existing community resource to support self care. As local councils are the main providers of social services in Wales, so it is local government who can enhance this facility in the town centre through incorporation of community pharmacies in their social services strategy and delivery.

2.19 The Committee queries *"The extent to which businesses and communities are engaged with the public sector led town centre regeneration projects or initiatives, and vice versa"*.

2.20 CPW is not aware of any significant attempts to actively engage community pharmacy businesses by any of the public sector led regeneration projects in Wales. This is to be regretted and is a significant missed opportunity by the projects concerned as is outlined in this evidence paper.

2.21 The Committee queries *"The impact of out-of-town retail sites on nearby town centres."*

- 2.22 It is impossible to argue that out-of-town retail parks have had a significant impact of the viability of town centres and district shopping centres evidenced by the boarded up shop units across Wales. However, the retention of the high street community pharmacy has continued to provide an anchor for many town centres generating a level of footfall which has prevented a more rapid and stark decline.
- 2.23 The Committee queries *“The use of funding sources and innovative financial solutions to contribute to town centre regeneration – including the Regeneration Investment Fund for Wales; the use of Business Improvement Districts; structural funds; Welsh Government, local authority and private sector investment.”*
- 2.24 One of the major community pharmacy contractors in Wales is involved in the only Business Improvement District in Wales, in Swansea. This model enables businesses to draw up a business plan for their town centre, in liaison with the local authority, and pay a levy to ensure its delivery. This particular community pharmacy contractor favours more town centre partnerships taking up the opportunity for Business Improvement Districts and CPW respects their experience and advice in this recommendation.
- 2.25 Many community pharmacies in recent years have made substantial investments internally and externally to their stores. This has been in line with the enhancement of community pharmacy services and necessary facilities, such as consultation rooms. These investments serve to enhance the surrounding town centre environment and it would be an appropriate encouragement if these investments were recognised by local town centre managements with some form of reciprocal support for the pharmacy. This may be in the form of any of the proposals in this evidence paper, such as

inclusion of the pharmacy in town centre signage, or special parking arrangements outside the pharmacy.

2.26 The Committee queries *“The importance of sustainable and integrated transport in town centres– including traffic management, parking and access.”*

2.27 Accessible transport, including parking, is crucial to the effective working of town centres and the convenience of shoppers. Patients who want to visit a town centre pharmacy need it to be easy for them to access. This means it needs to be near a form of transport access.

2.28 Some pharmacies are adjacent to, or fairly near, bus stops. But this is often more by luck than judgement. CPW recommend that bus stop location planning by local councils and by transport providers gives greater consideration to the proximity of a community pharmacy.

2.29 CPW also recommends that when parking restrictions exist in town centres, such as double yellow lines, that consideration is given to these being dealt with differently outside pharmacy premises so that short periods, say half an hour or an hour, are allowed for parking to allow for collection of prescriptions or dropping in for minor ailment treatment, flu vaccination, public health or other healthcare services.

2.30 CPW also draws the Committee’s attention to the detrimental effect that parking charges can have on town centres. When patients have to pay for parking to collect their free prescription then they may be more likely to have the prescription delivered to their home, (which is a frequent service provided by community pharmacies). This means that other health services in the pharmacy are not accessed and it means that the town centre is avoided. Thus the short term benefit of the parking fees is at the long term cost of

discouraging people from using their town centre, including their town centre pharmacy.

- 2.31 CPW also recommends that town centre management organisations always give consideration to access by older people and people with a range of disabilities to town centre facilities including the community pharmacies. This can include ensuring wheel chair access, replacement of kerbs and steps by gradual ramps for those with difficulty walking and large print signage for those with sight difficulties.
- 2.32 The Committee queries *“The potential impact of marketing and image on the regeneration of town centres – such as tourism, signage, public art, street furniture, lighting and safety concerns.”*
- 2.33 Successful town centres are a complex mix of many activities and, as CPW argues in this paper, at least one community pharmacy needs to be part of that mix. So also attractive and practical street furniture, public art and leisure facilities are equally important criteria in a successful mix.
- 2.34 CPW recommends that when planning and installing signage in town centres town centre management organisations should always seek to include signage to town centres pharmacies. The internationally recognised green cross sign for pharmacy should be used as part of the signage. This would assist footfall to one of the central elements of the town centre, but will also indicate that this town centre has one of the key features required for a complete and successful town centre.
- 2.35 The Committee queries *“The extent to which town centre regeneration initiatives can seek to provide greater employment opportunities for local people.”*

- 2.36 CPW estimates that the community pharmacy network across Wales employs more than 5,000 people. The majority of these work in town centres. The type of employment ranges from full time senior professional pharmacists and qualified pharmacy technicians at the top of their careers, to short term and part time Saturday and Sunday staff in the busy periods in the summer or in the winter. Pharmacies are a regular source of local employment in many areas and any growth of community pharmacy will result in growth in this employment across the range of skills required in a local pharmacy.
- 2.37 The Committee also say they would also welcome any recommendations on what measures could be used to evaluate success of initiatives undertaken to regenerate town centres.
- 2.38 CPW supports robust arrangements for evaluating and monitoring what constitutes success in a town centre. CPW recommends that a crucial criterion of town centre success is the existence of at least one community pharmacy. Further success would constitute the pharmacies providing an increasing range of healthcare services that enhance the offer of that town centre. Equally criteria for success should include the town centre managers giving clear and active support to the town centre pharmacy.

Part 3: Conclusion and Recommendations

- 3.1 A community pharmacy is a key part of a successful and sustainable town centre. Any support given to community pharmacy by the Welsh Government, the Local Health Board, Public Health Wales, NHS Wales or the local council also constitutes support for the town centre. There is much scope for this to be more widely recognised by the Welsh Government and by town centre

managers throughout Wales. There are a number of ways in which community pharmacies across Wales can support the success and sustainability of town centres. There are also a series of actions that can be taken by town centres to recognise the important role of their local pharmacy.

3.2 CPW makes 3 main recommendations to the Committee:

- a) Community pharmacies are a key part of town centres across Wales and so more investment in community pharmacy, from whatever source but especially from the Welsh Government and NHS Wales, is also a benefit to town centres and this should be more widely recognised by Welsh Government.
- b) The existence and growth of community pharmacies should be incorporated in the strategy and delivery of town centre partnerships throughout Wales.
- c) A Retail Sector Forum should be established by the Welsh Government and there should be a clear Ministerial responsibility for the retail sector. CPW has had to expend too much time and energy in the past 3 years on dealing with the carrier bag charge proposals as they affect our contractors. This has largely been the result of poor handling of the overall retail sector by the Welsh Government. CPW does not wish this to happen again, so Government should now take steps to establish a mechanism for giving the same consideration to the retail sector as it gives to other sectors of the same value and importance in the Welsh economy.

3.3. CPW also make 7 further specific recommendations on particular points raised by the inquiry:

- a) Bus stop location planning by local councils and by transport providers needs to give greater consideration to the proximity of a community pharmacy
- b) Arrangements of parking restrictions in town centres, such as double yellow lines, should give consideration to these being dealt with differently outside pharmacy premises to allow for ease of patients making visits to the pharmacy
- c) Town centre management organisations should give consideration to access by older people and people with a range of disabilities to town centre community pharmacies.
- d) Signage in town centres should seek to include signage to town centres pharmacies and incorporate the internationally recognised green cross
- e) Success criteria for a town centre should include the existence of at least one community pharmacy and an increasing range of healthcare services provided through community pharmacies in the town centre
- f) Success criteria should also include the town centre managers giving clear and active support to the town centre pharmacy in their strategy and delivery
- g) The compulsory charge on single use carrier bags should be suspended and replaced with a proactive voluntary agreement between Welsh government, local government, retailers and customers to reduce the use of environmentally harmful and unsightly plastic carrier bags.

- 3.4 CPW stands ready to work in collaboration with relevant bodies and organisations seeking to maintain and regenerate Wales' town centres.
- 3.5 CPW is content for this response to be made publicly available, to give oral evidence to the Committee if required and would like to be sent a copy of any relevant papers and reports that the Enterprise and Business Committee produce as part of this inquiry.

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