

Review Steering Group: Myth-busting and FAQs

The pharmacy Review Steering Group (RSG) is working to develop proposals to improve contractor representation and support at both local and national levels. You can read more about this at: <https://pharmacy-review.org>

To inform its work and thinking, the RSG has been engaging with the wider community pharmacy sector since the spring of this year. Through the various engagement events, a number of common questions, and some misconceptions, have emerged, and in this new series, which is a follow-on from our previous Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), we will be looking to address these for contractors.

In this first instalment we consider myths and FAQs about representation on the RSG and engagement.

Myth 1: Independent contractors are being left out of RSG decision-making

This is not true: there are four independent contractors on the RSG, as well as two representatives from independent multiples. All 10 Members of the RSG are involved in the collective decision-making of the group.

In order to come up with a proposal that has widespread support across the sector, regular and meaningful engagement with contractors of all sizes is vital, and the RSG recognises that given the widespread geography and number of independent contractors, this is a challenge. For instance, the RSG has listened to contractors on how they want to receive information and shaped its communications and engagement to reach as many people as possible.

Engagement with independent contractors includes the full range of online and offline methods available in these difficult times, such as ongoing dialogue with the National Pharmacy Association; sharing of information via independent support groups; engagement with contractors via LPC meetings; focus groups held at lunchtime and in the evenings; dialogue with PSNC independent Regional Representatives; regular email updates sent to PSNC's full newsletter list; and the establishment of a Contractor Forum.

Independent contractors can find out about the RSG at: <https://pharmacy-review.org> and contact any of the independent RSG Members (email review@pharmacy-review.org for contact details).

FAQ: Have you engaged with all the pharmacy trade bodies?

Yes, the RSG has engaged extensively with stakeholders from across the sector to help inform its decision-making process, and is continuing to do so as the proposals are developed. The RSG Programme Team has held dedicated sessions with AIM, CCA and the NPA at key points in its development. Trade bodies have also fed in via submissions to the RSG, as well as

exchanges of correspondence. RSG Members have also been involved in presentations at trade body Board meetings and will continue to do so into 2022.

Myth 2: The RSG is not engaging with most community pharmacy contractors

It may be the case that some contractors have not yet engaged directly with the RSG, however the RSG has been proactively engaging with as many contractors as possible, given the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. The RSG's contractor engagement has taken place via a variety of channels including: the website, email newsletters, podcasts and video blogs, FAQs, focus group events, webinar updates, via trade associations and other groups, at events such as the Pharmacy Show, and regular presentations at LPC meetings:

LPC and contractor engagements events in 2021:

- Presentations and Q&A at over 40 LPC meetings to date
- "Your representation, Your Say" event held on 9th March
- LPC engagement event 24th May
- 4 open contractor engagement events Apr/May – on principles, programme of work
- RSG webinar for the pharmacy sector 14th June
- Pharmacy Business Conference 21st September
- Pharmacy Show keynote speeches 18th and 19th October

Contractors or Contractor representatives (including the Contractor Forum) focus groups:

- 10 Focus Groups 30th July – 4th August
- 3 Focus Groups 19th – 22nd October

LPC and PSNC member meetings: presentations delivered at key sector events

- 30th July
- 2nd August
- 4th August
- 16th September Annual LPC conference
- 18 November

Analysis shows this is having some success with some highlights being:

- 22,000+ views of the RSG website since the start of the year
- 8,413 website views in Oct 2021
- Email/ newsletter updates being opened by more than 6,000 recipients

RSG Members remain available to engage with any contractors who wishes to contact the group. If contractors or others have thoughts on how the RSG could better engage with the sector, please email review@pharmacy-review.org

FAQ: Who else has the RSG engaged with?

In addition to engaging with contractors and their trade association representatives, the RSG held a session over the summer for wider stakeholders including employee representatives,

the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the General Pharmaceutical Council and independent contractor support organisations. The RSG engages with PSNC on an ongoing basis, and with LPCs through presentations at individual LPC meetings and conferences.

FAQ: How can contractors find out about what is discussed at RSG meetings?

Every RSG meeting is minuted and Agendas and Minutes of RSG meetings are available here on the RSG website: <https://pharmacy-review.org/rsg-meeting-minutes/>

Any contractors with further questions can contact the RSG, or individual members, by emailing review@pharmacy-review.org

Myth 3: The next we can expect to hear from the RSG is its proposal

This is not true, as further engagement with the sector – including events for contractors and LPCs – is planned for early in 2022.

The RSG spent the summer working together with the trade associations and wider sector to define what local and regional representation and support bodies must do in the future. Following up in the autumn, a further series of focus groups with contractors and LPCs took feedback on what those support bodies need to look like to deliver the best results for contractors.

This is not easy work: the jobs these bodies do are complex, and the diversity of the community pharmacy sector and the need to ensure everyone’s voice will be fairly heard is at the forefront of RSG Members’ minds. But the RSG is getting closer to having proposals for change – to affect both LPCs and PSNC – for contractors to consider.

The RSG intends to publish information about its proposals in a ‘prospectus’ in 2022. Before that it is intended to hold a further round of engagement events with the sector through January and February, further information will be announced before the Christmas break. Following publication of the prospectus there will also be further chances for all contractors and others to ask questions about the proposals and to engage with RSG Members.

Myth 4: Once the proposal is published, this is a done deal for the sector

The situation is more complex than this statement would imply. Firstly, any proposals that the RSG puts forward need to be voted on by all community pharmacy contractors. The RSG has set out its thinking on this vote in a [paper here](#).

Secondly, while a positive contractor vote in favour of the proposals will signal a clear mandate for change, it will still be for LPCs and PSNC to take forward change. This must be set against the backdrop of the NHS accelerating its move towards a reorganisation into the ICS framework, with potentially far-reaching consequences for local recognition and funding streams for the sector.

It is the case that once the RSG's final proposals are published, those proposals cannot be changed. But if the sector votes against them, the RSG will have to think again. That said, the RSG intends to put forward proposals that will be supported across all parts of the sector – that is the purpose of the extensive sector engagement programme that the RSG has carried out to date, and which will continue early in the New Year.