

Review Steering Group: Myth-busting and FAQs second edition

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 last year. Through the various engagement events, a number of common questions, and some misconceptions, have emerged, which we began to address for contractors by launching this [Myth-busting and FAQ](#) series last month.

In this second instalment we consider myths and FAQs about the planned contractor vote. The contractor vote is expected to be held by Easter 2022 and it will give all contractors the chance to have a say on any proposals put forward by the RSG: a vote in favour of the proposals will set a clear mandate for change within the sector's representation and support systems.

[Read the RSG's working plan for the vote](#)

Myth 1: A simple overall majority will win the contractor vote

No, a simple majority won't win the vote. Here's how voting will work:

1. The result will be measured on the percentage of all votes cast
2. A two-thirds majority of all those casting a vote is required to approve the vote
3. The target voter turnout will be 66% of the contractor base (two thirds)

FAQ: Will the vote be broken down into different sections, or will it be only one question with the choice to either accept or decline it all?

The RSG's intention is that the vote will pose a binary question with a response to accept or reject the proposals it has put forward. We will not ask contractors to choose between several options as it is crucial that the outcome is a clear decision to either proceed or not. The RSG will continue to ensure there are opportunities through the development of the proposal for contractors to provide their input and feedback, and to help shape the future model and have their voices heard.

FAQ: How do I vote?

We still expect to put proposals to contractors and hold a contractor vote before Easter 2022. The formal proposal will be communicated to contractors at least a month in advance, so that

contractors have time to engage with and reflect on the proposals. Full instructions on how to vote will be given in due course and contractors will have a two-week period in which to vote online.

Myth 2: The contractor vote won't be fair to all sectors

This isn't the case. Our ambition is to develop proposals collaboratively with the sector which will ultimately lead to changes that benefit all contractors. We do not believe that dividing the sector up for a vote would be a good starting point from which to launch change, the very purpose of which is to unify and strengthen the sector's voice.

We have set the bar very high to ensure that both CCA and independents can influence the outcome. In our voting proposal, even with a 90% turnout from CCA members, to achieve a 66% turnout rate will require nearly half of non CCA contractors to participate in the vote. After much consideration, we believe our proposal hits the right balance, indeed we have received no negative feedback on it during our focus groups, including from the independent contractors present.

FAQ: Why are you not seeking a majority across the different groups within the sector?

This was considered, however as well as being divisive, it would require unrealistically high levels of engagement with the contractor vote to be viable. Under this proposal, if even a small proportion of any part of the sector were not to engage with the vote – for reasons that could be entirely unrelated to the proposals – then this would make moving forward, even with proposals that have cross-sector support, impossible by invalidating the vote of the majority.

We believe we have set a high bar for engagement and a two thirds turnout is the minimum that we are aiming for. But we need to be realistic about the fact that in any vote, general elections included, a proportion of the electorate will choose not to engage.

Myth 3: The proposals have already been decided upon without any contractor input

The RSG is working hard to develop proposals to put to all community pharmacy contractors about the future of contractor representation and support. [Following significant engagement with the sector](#), the RSG has defined the roles of the local and national representative bodies, considered the contractor decision-making process, and worked through analysis and suggestions on local representation. We are now focusing on national representation and support.

This work is very complex, not least given the importance of getting national representation and its links with local representation right, the diversity of views we continue to receive, and

recognising the statutory role of PSNC and the LPCs, and it is taking longer than the RSG had initially hoped.

To help get our proposals right, we are continuing to engage with the sector, and looking forward to our [next round of engagement events](#) later this month. Further conversations with PSNC and the contractor trade associations are also in progress.

Although we recognise that it is unlikely that we will come up with a model/process that receives unanimous agreement, the aim of our engagement programme is to harness as many views as possible to create a proposal that has broad support.

FAQ: What happens if the vote does not lead to the acceptance of the proposal?

The RSG is working hard, through all its engagement, to ensure that it comes up with proposals that have broad support across the sector. We want to avoid putting forward proposals that do not have this support.

However, in the event of a vote not in favour of the proposals, the RSG will need to rapidly re-engage with the sector to determine what changes would be acceptable.

It is understood from the discussions with the sector that the significance of the changes to the NHS structures, as well as the continuing pressures of the pandemic, ensures that “doing nothing” is not an option for the pharmacy sector.

In meetings with contractor groups, there has been general consensus that pharmacy needs a step change at both local and national levels, in the quality of representation with the NHS as much as the services provided to contractors.