



PE1493/C

18 December 2013

Andrew Howlett
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Howlett

Consideration of Petition PE1493

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce a Sunshine Act for Scotland, creating a searchable record of all payments (including payments in kind) to NHS Scotland healthcare workers from Industry and Commerce.

Thank you for offering Community Pharmacy Scotland the opportunity to comment on this petition. Community Pharmacy Scotland is the organisation which represents the owners of Scotland's 1250 community pharmacies. In order to provide pharmaceutical services in Scotland each owner must hold a contract with the relevant NHS Health Board – the healthcare workers in community pharmacies are therefore not employed by NHS Scotland but by independent contractors.

Community Pharmacy Scotland as an organisation does not accept sponsorship or hospitality from Industry or Commerce. The pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who work in community pharmacy must register with the independent Regulator, the General Pharmaceutical Council, and must abide by their standards for conduct ethics and performance. In addition the owners and superintendents of registered pharmacies must abide by the Regulator's standards for registered pharmacies. These standards are there to deliver safe and effective practice. Each individual working within community pharmacy must therefore consider how they should respond to any approach from industry or commerce but the over-riding principle must be to make the safety of a patient their first concern. Pharmacy professionals who do not meet the standards face the possibility of fitness to practise proceedings.

Community Pharmacy Scotland is aware of the NHS Guidance Document: A Common Understanding 2012 Working Together for Patients. The document clearly states that independent contractors fall within the scope of the guidance. NHS Boards should therefore have taken steps to make all independent contractors aware of the contents of the guidance.

Community Pharmacy Scotland has considered the SPICE briefing and the transcript of the session when the petition was first introduced. We are supportive of the principle that financial transactions between healthcare professionals should be transparent and declared and to that end creation of a database would seem to be necessary. At this time it is not clear to us how we then translate from the information in that database to deliver benefits for patients. It is also not clear to us the level of resource which will be needed to set up, maintain and derive information from that database.

The Sunshine Acts in other countries appear to be of fairly recent implementation and again it is too early to draw any conclusions on how effective they will be.

Community Pharmacy Scotland would be supportive of any actions which help to maintain public confidence in the services provided by healthcare professionals.

Yours sincerely

Dr E C Weir
Head of Pharmacy Services