

**SOLIHULL HEALTHWATCH REPORT ON THE  
CONSULTATION PROCESS ON SOLIHULL PHARMACEUTICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2018**

***DECLARATION OF INTEREST***

*I have unpaid voluntary roles in three of the bodies mentioned in this report. I'm a member of the Solihull PNA Steering Group, deputy chair of Monkspath Patient Participation Group (PPG), and chair of Solihull PPGs Network. But I also serve on the Advisory Board of Solihull Healthwatch, which agreed that my drafting the report didn't create any significant conflicts of interest.*

*Tony Green, 31 January 2018.*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

As from 1st April 2013 every Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) in England has a statutory responsibility to publish every three years and keep up to date a statement of the need for pharmaceutical services in its area, otherwise referred to as a pharmaceutical needs assessment (PNA). Before 2013, NHS Primary Care Trusts produced PNAs.

The PNA is a key document used in the development and improvement of pharmaceutical services in Solihull. National Health Service England (NHSE) is responsible for commissioning pharmaceutical services and is expected to make reference to the PNA when making decisions about market entry for new service providers, as well as in commissioning advanced and enhanced services. It is essential that PNAs should be of a high standard and sufficiently robust to withstand legal challenges that could occur because of the PNA's relevance to decisions about the commissioning of services and the proposed opening of a new pharmacy.

The PNA document is substantial: the one published in 2015 consisted of 185 A4 pages, which hints at the volume of information it contains. The content of PNAs is set out in Schedule 1 to the NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013.

The main aim of the Solihull PNA is to describe the current pharmaceutical services in Solihull, systematically identify any gaps/unmet needs and, in consultation with stakeholders, make recommendations on future development.

## **2. STEERING GROUP**

To oversee the process, a PNA Steering Group was formed in July 2017 consisting of key professionals mainly drawn from the Public Health department at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), Marketing & Communications from SMBC, Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC), Local Medical Committee (LMC), Solihull Healthwatch, local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHSE West Midlands Area Team. The steering group meetings were chaired by Manisha Sharma, Senior Public Health Specialist – Ill Health Prevention.

Sadly the PNA Steering Group member from NHSE West Midlands Area Team, Brian Wallis, whose role was in contract management, died a few days after attending the first Steering Group meeting in July.

After that there was no communication with the Area Team and the Steering Group later learned that Brian had been one of only three staff based at the contract management office.

## **3. HWB ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Steering Group meets monthly until the publication deadline, which is the last day in March 2018. Its meeting dates dovetail with meetings of the HWB and key Council committees. The HWB re-examines the PNA annually and updates it as necessary.

## **4. CONSULTATION STEPS**

Many relevant bodies were directly represented through membership of the PNA Steering Group. However, attendance at Steering Group meetings by individual members ranged from all to none. It is unknown how effectively each member fed back what they had learned to the bodies they represented, so documents and summary notes of each meeting were sent to each of those bodies. Reports on PNA findings and progress were shared with the HWB at each of its meetings.

The following table shows the actions taken in September 2017 for the Patient Experience Survey and pharmacy questionnaire and planned for the public consultation on the PNA in November/December.

Stakeholder	Mechanism	Responsible
Pharmacy contractors	Email	Public Health
Councillors	Weekly Members' Bulletin	Comms
SMBC staff	Solihull Way, intranet news page	Comms
Public Health contacts	Stay Connected bulletin	Comms
General public	Website consultation page, press release, twitter, Facebook	Comms
Solihull CCG	Website, twitter, Little and Often bulletin to GPs, internal channel to staff, email/hard copies to patient groups	Comms
Sustain	Website, Sustain Alert	Comms
Libraries	Stay Connected bulletin, hard copies of survey plus freepost envelopes and promotional poster	Comms Public Health
GPs	Hard copies of survey along with freepost envelopes and promotional poster	Public Health
Users of pharmacies	Hard copies of survey along with freepost envelopes and promotional poster	Public Health
Patient Participation Group (PPG) Network	Email	Public Health
Healthwatch Solihull	Website, twitter	Comms
Local Professional Network (LPN Network)	Email	Public Health
Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC)	Email	Public Health
Local Medical Committee (LMC)	Email	Public Health
Family Information Service Parents Network bulletin	Email	Comms
Schools	School newsletters and Parent Mail	Comms
Carers' Centre	Email	Comms
Age UK Solihull	Email	Comms
Enable-Solihull	Email	Comms
Integrated Care & Support Board (ICASS)	ICASS newsletter/website)	Comms
Solihull Updates	Twitter, Facebook	Comms
Talk about North Solihull	Website, newsletter	Comms

## **5. CONSULTATION DIFFICULTIES**

Many people, if they happen to think about it, would assume that a decision to open or close a pharmacy is purely due to market forces, as it is for other types of retail outlet. Since a PNA is a triennial event involving only a small group of people in its 6 to 12 months preparation, the great majority of people are unaware that a PNA exists. Also, some people may not immediately make the link between the terms “pharmaceutical” and “pharmacist” or between that and the more commonly-used “chemist”. All these make it difficult to create meaningful engagement with the public in relation to the PNA.

## **6. A CHANGE OF PLAN**

It had been intended to hold two open public events in North Solihull in November or December 2017, to enable the public to give their views on the draft PNA. North Solihull was picked because a high proportion of questionnaire responses from there expressed dissatisfaction with pharmacy services. The events would be jointly branded under SMBC Public Health and Solihull Healthwatch, and staffed by one person from each.

However, this plan was cancelled because of the expectation that public attendance would be very low, plus capacity issues in Public Health, and instead, Manisha asked the Colebridge Trust to mention the consultation in sessions that they hold and try and help people to complete the questionnaire online where possible. The sessions groups include vulnerable people who have learning disabilities or may be struggling with reading and writing but still use health services regularly.

## **7. NUMBERS OF QUESTIONNAIRE REPLIES**

In the 2015-2018 PNA consultation there were 326 survey responses, with 46 responses from the draft consultation. 41 pharmacies had responded to the pharmacy survey.

In 2018-21, there were 945 survey responses, with 131 responses from the draft consultation, so both indicate that engagement with the public has been nearly three times as effective as it was last time. Some of the difference may be due to copies of the survey forms having been sent to two communications lists totalling around 250 people, one for Monkspath Patient Participation Group (PPG) and the other for Solihull PPGs Network, and mentioned at their meetings, neither of which was done last time.



However, there were only 35 responses to the pharmacy survey this time, 6 fewer than in 2015-2018. It's unknown whether further attempts to engage pharmacies might have yielded further responses. It seems more likely that the information on which pharmacists were asked to comment is more accurate than it was three years ago, since if no correction is needed there is less reason to respond.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Measured by responses gained, the PNA consultation process nearly tripled its effectiveness compared with 2015-2018.

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