

Health and Social Care Committee

Inquiry into the contribution of community pharmacy to health services in Wales

CP 31 - Welsh Refugee Council

Community Pharmacy Consultation Response 2011

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Our Organisation:

The Welsh Refugee Council has over twenty-one years experience of working with refugees, asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers. It provides confidential and independent advice services across Wales, advocates for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, supports capacity building for refugee community organisations, and promotes good community relations. Its vision is to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are safe, and that they get the support they need to rebuild their lives in Wales.

The Welsh Refugee Council's work is guided by the core principle that the right to seek asylum is a fundamental right. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, an international standard that has provided the essential protection to save hundreds and thousands of lives since it was established.

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1. The effectiveness of the Community Pharmacy contract in enhancing the contribution of community pharmacy to health and wellbeing services.

Our views:

The Welsh Refugee Council's experience is that refugees and asylum seekers come from diverse backgrounds where English is not their first language. We are concerned that language may pose potential barriers to the delivery of community pharmacy services as many cannot speak, read or write English or Welsh. We would like to recommend that the Committee consider the availability of interpreting or translation services to reflect the linguistic backgrounds of refugees and asylum seekers in the Community Pharmacy Contract Inquiry.

2. The extent to which Local Health Boards have taken up the opportunities presented by the contract to extend pharmacy services through the provision of 'enhanced' services, and examples of successful schemes.

Our views:

While the Welsh Refugee Council does not have the expertise to measure the extent to which Local Health Boards have taken up the opportunities presented by the existing contract to extend pharmacy services through the provision of 'enhanced' services, and give examples of successful healthcare schemes in Wales, we would like this inquiry to ensure that Local Health Boards extend pharmacy services opportunities to refugees and asylum seeking health service users in their new 'Community Pharmacy Contract' Inquiry.

3. The scale and adequacy of 'advanced' services provided by community pharmacies:

Our views:

While the Welsh Refugee Council cannot provide expert opinion on the scale and adequacy of 'advanced' services provided by community pharmacies in Wales, we would like the Health and Social Care Committee to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are considered as part of the community in Wales when looking at the scale and adequacy of services provided by the Community Pharmacies.

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4. The scope for further provision of services by community pharmacies in addition to the dispensing of NHS medicines and appliances, including the potential for minor ailments schemes.

Our views:

The Welsh Refugee Council is concerned about the possible side effects of medications on non-English speaking service users including refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. Our experience shows that many refugees and asylum seekers come from countries where modern medication is not yet available. Consequently, many refugees and asylum seekers may have difficulties in understanding how to use prescribed medicines they get from community pharmacies, e.g. potential side effects due to the patient's lack of understanding on how frequently the medicines will be taken, the quantity to be taken and at what time.

We would therefore like the Health and Social Care Committee to consider these issues in the inquiry and ensure that Community Pharmacies provide adequate information on the use of medications to this category of service users. For example by using illustrative of images via Easy Read leaflets and instructions -which can easily be understood by patients.

5. The current and potential impact on demand for NHS services in primary and secondary care of an expansion of community pharmacy services, and any cost savings they may offer.

Our views:

The Welsh Refugee Council does not have the expertise to measure the current and potential impact on demand for NHS services in primary and secondary care of an expansion of community pharmacy services, costs, sustainability and savings they may offer in Wales. However, we would like the Health and Social Care Committee to ensure that services provided by Local Health Boards and Community Pharmacies in Wales are safe, efficient, and patient-focused in order to meet the needs of all peoples in the community including refugees and asylum seekers.

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Any response should be email to: HSCCommittee@wales.gov.uk

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