

Written Ministerial Statement

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Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Community Pharmacy

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Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make a Statement to the Assembly about community pharmacy remuneration. I am making the statement today in response to Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland's request that any public announcement would follow a planned meeting of the CPNI Board held on Thursday 13 December 2012.

I advised the Assembly on 13 March 2012 that it was clearly, highly regrettable that the reimbursement and remuneration of the community pharmacy sector has been the subject of two recent judicial reviews.

At that time I restated my clear commitment and determination to find a fair and appropriate way ahead on this difficult issue and advised that the appeal should go ahead because of its effect across government particularly the Regulatory Impact Assessment point.

Following a year long process involving DHSSPS/ HSC Board and Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland (CPNI) and culminating in a period of intensive negotiations under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary DHSSPS, an accommodation has been reached that has allowed both sides to withdraw the respective appeal and cross-appeal of the Treacy J judgement of 21 December 2011 of community pharmacy remuneration arrangements. The agreed accommodation with CPNI now provides an opportunity to break the cycle of litigation on these matters.

The agreement with Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland will allow for a collaborative

process to be developed in respect of the cost investigation and maintained in respect to the ongoing margin survey process. On the wider public interest point of Regulatory Impact Assessment, I am now advised that as there has been no collateral difficulty with this issue across Government to date, the RIA issue can be resolved through the administrative rather than the legal process.

My emphasis and priority has been to seek agreement and a way ahead that will recognise and support the new and evolving role of community pharmacists in the new world of reformed health and social care services.

The agreement with CPNI will allow important evidence to be gathered and will also allow community pharmacy to transition to a new way of working. Negotiations will also continue on a new contract for community pharmacy which will enable both independent contractors and commissioning authorities to further enhance and develop the role of community pharmacy in improving the health and well being of the Northern Ireland population.