

Review of the Year

Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex on behalf of East Sussex,
West Sussex and Surrey Local Pharmaceutical Committees

All throughout the pandemic we've done our best to keep each other safe. We've supported each other, we've helped keep our communities safe and healthy and if the past year has taught us anything, it's just how important community pharmacy is, right at the heart of communities.

A year like no other

A Letter from the Chairs of your LPCs

Dear fellow contractor

Welcome to our review of the year.

During our combined 85 years we have spent working in community pharmacy we cannot recall a year of greater uncertainty or change.

The pandemic has been a crisis first for people, and second for our sector. COVID-19 has tested community pharmacy's resilience and seen everyone dig deep to help keep each other safe, to keep your services running smoothly, and to safeguard your financial health. As a group of LPCs we have always succeeded by bringing people together, putting contractors first and getting best value for you, especially when times are

tough and we must focus on the basics. Last year was definitely one of those times.

We are grateful for how you and your staff teams have adapted so quickly to your changing needs and those of our sector. Not only did you deliver planned projects and services, you also took on significant amounts of extra work and developed new services and projects, adopting new ways of doing things in a very short space of time.

While the outlook remains challenging for us all, we very much appreciate your support, understanding and patience during this period: thank you all.



Craig McEwan
Chair East Sussex LPC



Mark Donaghy
Chair West Sussex LPC



Rupri Bhasin
Chair Surrey LPC

Helping contractors to survive and continue to thrive and grow

One of the biggest challenges we faced when social distancing and lockdown measures were introduced was managing our representative and decision-making processes safely whilst still maintaining accountability to all 520 contractors represented by our three committees.

Committee meetings in each LPC area take place every two months and it's our duty and obligation to ensure they are as accessible to both LPC members and contractors as they would be normally.

The online conferencing solution that our staff team developed is still working well after almost 17 months. All meetings are planned well in advance by Micky Cassar,

business administrator, with previous minutes distributed to members along with background papers and an agenda to keep the conversation on-track.

Attendees sign-in to the videoconferencing tool Zoom, and the meeting then flows as it would under normal circumstances – even a comfort break to grab refreshments is built in.



Those at the meeting are able to raise their hand to ask questions in the meeting.

Votes, if required, are done by asking each member in turn whether they agree or not, as they would be in person.

Micky Cassar said: "It's great that we have videoconferencing and can continue our work this way, however meeting online has meant a different way of working. There are some things we need to remember to do during meetings, like muting/unmuting microphones but meetings run effectively and allow input from all, just like face-to-face meetings.

"While LPC members are happy to attend the meetings from home or their pharmacy I think we are all starting to miss the traditional format of being together in the same room" she added.

Once minutes of each meeting are agreed they are uploaded to our website and can be found at a tab called About us.

LPC meetings are open to observers, and we especially encourage community pharmacy contractors and their team members to join us to find out what their LPC does. Anyone can attend an LPC meeting as an observer in person or by video, this needs to be pre-arranged.

Police & Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne visited a community pharmacy to talk to staff about abuse and violence towards pharmacy workers during the pandemic



During the visit Mrs Bourne heard of the difficulties all pharmacies have faced during the pandemic – with high demands for pharmacy services and advice resulting in some cases in longer waiting times for prescriptions to be dispensed or to speak to a pharmacist. All of this accompanied by the additional COVID safety restrictions in place means that some patients had become frustrated and made offensive gestures or acted aggressively, shouting at the counter staff.

We invited PCC Bourne as part of our new membership of the Safer Sussex Business Partnership – which sees senior members of Sussex Police and business crime experts working with local retailers and other partners to find ways to reduce reporting time to allow more time for shop workers and pharmacists to do their job.

Working in partnership strategically and on the ground

As Christmas approached, we were grateful that this would be a different holiday season to Easter when every pharmacy was directed to open at short notice, jettisoning many people's plans for a few days off (to recover and take a breath after the busiest time).

With an increase in positive Covid-cases due to the Kent (now called Delta) variant on top of winter pressures in the NHS, it was important to remind patients and residents that community pharmacy would remain open across Sussex and Surrey for vital healthcare but maybe operating under different opening times to usual.

As with each of the bank holidays, we again encouraged people to plan ahead to make sure they didn't end up without the vital healthcare and medicines they needed and helped manage demand for NHS services. Our Christmas communications campaign harnessed the power and enthusiasm of colleagues and partners across the public and community, and voluntary sectors.

Seasonally themed social media assets, like this one, were made available to local authorities, primary care, and CCGs to cascade to others and to use in their public

facing communications, helping to manage seasonal surges in demand for pharmacy services, help stop pharmacy phones ringing constantly, promote self-care and help take pressure off NHS primary care and A&E services.

Helping your communities feel prepared ahead of the festive period

Important pharmacy messages from Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex.

- Please integrate the following pharmacy messages into winter wellbeing communications to your communities over the festive period.

Need to find a pharmacy over the festive period?
Why not use the [list of pharmacies](#) to find your closest store. Remember to avoid pharmacies if you, or someone you live with, is showing symptoms of Covid-19.

Pharmacy is open over the festive period but opening times may vary. Check your pharmacy's opening times [online](#) before you visit.

Prepare by ordering your repeat prescriptions. Make sure you have enough medication to last over the festive season, or re-order around seven days before you are due to run out.

If you receive medicine on repeat prescription, you can now use [gov.uk apps and websites](#) to order online. You, or a friend or relative, can then collect your medicines from @pharmacy or have them delivered to your home before available.

When you order a repeat prescription online, you can have your prescription sent electronically to a pharmacy or dispenser of your choice. This means you no longer need to collect a paper prescription from your GP surgery.

Save pharmacy deliveries for priority patients. Why not ask a friend, family member or carer if they can pick up your prescription? If you have been told you are clinically extremely vulnerable, contact your pharmacy for delivery.

Collecting a prescription for someone else? Here's some useful advice to help you. This useful [poster](#) has key points of information for people who are picking up medicines from a pharmacy on behalf of someone else.

Don't stockpile medicines. Community pharmacy teams are working hard to make sure that all patients continue to have access to the medicines they need, when they need them. Please only order what you need.

Contact Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex for further information.
Email: info@communitypharmasurreyandSussex.co.uk | Follow us on Twitter: @CPSP_Sussex

Keep medicine cabinets stocked. Be prepared with a small stock of medical essentials like a thermometer and painkillers, such as paracetamol, at home. Why not use the walk-in service at your local pharmacy to ask for advice on what you should keep in your cabinet?

Respect pharmacy staff. Community pharmacists and clinical healthcare providers deliver vital support as part of the NHS family. Please be patient and polite to staff where there are changes to usual services, or if things take longer than usual over this busy period.

NHS 111 for urgent care. If you need urgent medical help or advice for non-life threatening conditions, visit [111 online](#) or call 111.

Ongoing services and advice:

Suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19? Please don't visit a pharmacy if you test positive or if you are showing symptoms - dry persistent cough, fever or shortness of breath. Pharmacy staff must be kept safe so they can continue to serve their communities. Ask your pharmacist about the delivery options available instead.

Flu vaccination services may look a little different this year to help patients and pharmacy staff safe from Covid-19. If you are in an at risk group, contact your pharmacy team or GP for appointments, and remember to wear a face covering.

Self-care advice: Did you know your pharmacy team can offer advice on a wide range of subjects including self-care and managing common illnesses? Walk in to your local pharmacy for advice from a highly trained healthcare professional.

Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex

As we started to learn to live with COVID-19 the LPCs continued to highlight community pharmacy as a key part of the primary care team, including the important and central roles of keeping COVID-19 at bay and helping protect residents for the future.

Working in partnership with PSNC, other pharmacy bodies, NHSE&I South East regional team and others, we pressed local opinion formers to urge the Government to move quickly towards a rapid roll-out of the Covid vaccine from community pharmacy in Surrey and Sussex. In our approach we drew heavily on how we could help the Government achieve their ambitious vaccination programme as well as pharmacies accessibility at the heart of communities.

Vaccinations

By April 2021 community pharmacies were delivering thousands of vaccinations in Sussex and Surrey. We are incredibly proud of the achievements of the 18 pharmacies selected to do this in Surrey and Sussex, especially Guildford Superdrug, Ticehurst Pharmacy, Midhurst Pharmacy and Laycocks Pharmacy (Hastings). These four as the first to be commissioned, were thrown into the regional, national (and in one case international!) media spotlight because of

their work which has also included work to combat vaccine hesitancy, involve the whole community, and links to the development of the vaccine our pharmacies were giving.


Testing

As the country looked for ways to get out of the second national lockdown, we worked at pace with our four top-tier local authorities to enable supervised rapid lateral flow COVID-19 tests from community pharmacies across both Sussex and Surrey. An assisted lateral flow testing service was introduced in 102 pharmacies across our geography with public health funding, for everyone who lives or works in Sussex or Surrey who could not work from home and who did not have access to a symptom-free test through other routes. The service has just been extended to September in Surrey and March in Sussex, and runs alongside the Government's Pharmacy Collect service where residents can collect boxes of seven lateral flow tests to do themselves at home twice a week.



**COVID-19
Vaccination
Centre**

←



*Remembering our
colleagues from our
community pharmacy
family who have died
during the COVID-19
pandemic*

Discharge Medicines Service is supporting patients coming out of hospital

Since March 2019 when the Transfer of Care Around Medicines (TCAM) pathway went live in East Sussex, it continued to roll-out across our geography as a precursor to the new national discharge medicines service (DMS) which launched on 15 February 2021 as an essential service.

Kent Surrey and Sussex Academic Health Sciences Network (KSS AHSN) continued to project manage the set-up of the digital pathway and helped embed this new and exciting collaboration across more than 50 percent of secondary care trusts in Surrey and Sussex, with plans in place for the remainder to go-live during 2021–22.



Some pharmacies stopped the issue of Blister Packs as they needed to prioritise their time

This was not a blanket “ban”, but availability was preserved for the most vulnerable who needed them most after a robust assessment of patient need by the community pharmacist.

We co-produced and distributed a briefing note with the Local Medical Committee (LMC) to help inform GPs working in primary care and our wider stakeholder community that it is the discretion of the community pharmacist to decide if they can support requests for blister packs, taking into account Equality Act 2010 requirements. This was the second briefing note we co-produced with the LMC for GPs and community pharmacies; the other was related to the wider benefits of working together during our flu season.

BRIEFING NOTE

Medicines compliance aids

Guidance and FAQs for primary care providers

5 pages: January 2020

Key members of the primary care team

NHS flu vaccination programme

Our community pharmacies cemented their important role in the NHS flu vaccination programme as they helped Government achieve ambitious vaccination targets. Flu vaccination services from Sussex and Surrey pharmacies continued to be rated very highly, with many patients saying they would recommend the pharmacy service to others. Flu services looked a bit different this year to keep patients and pharmacy staff safe and many pharmacies changed the services they offered so they could focus on getting their communities vaccinated against flu. Pharmacies reported getting more requests for vaccinations and these came earlier in the season than usual. Anyone seeking vaccination was asked to be patient as pharmacies and their GP colleagues vaccinated people as quickly as they could. Increased demand saw many pharmacies use up their stocks of flu vaccines with many having to wait to see if they could obtain more from central Government stocks later in the season. By the end of the flu season community pharmacies in Sussex and Surrey had delivered 67 per cent more flu vaccines compared with 2019-20.

**‘JUST’
THE FLU?**



The flu virus kills thousands every year.
The flu vaccine is the best protection for you and those around you.

JUST GET YOUR FREE FLU JAB

Ask your pharmacist or GP if you're eligible.



Healthy living pharmacies

In January all pharmacies became contractually obliged to promote health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. Now, there is always at least one specially trained member of staff available during the majority of opening hours to advise on a range of health, self-care, and wellbeing topics.

Healthy living pharmacy plays to our strengths as accessible healthcare providers near to people's homes, helps take the pressure off other NHS services and utilises more of a pharmacy teams' clinical expertise, which is still an under-used resource.



Making sure medicines got to those who need them

The NHS pandemic delivery service helped those who were shielding, but thousands of others also needed help to get medicines.

We were overwhelmed by how communities and citizens came together to help NHS community pharmacy ensure that essential medicines got through to those who needed them most. Colleagues told us they valued working with the voluntary and community sector, NHS community responders, Healthwatch, local council Community Response Hubs and countless others to make sure no one went without their medicines or prescriptions from their local pharmacy.

In an email sent to all local authorities and the community and voluntary sector across Sussex and Surrey we acknowledged that pharmacists had been working as hard as they could to help everyone during intense and difficult times, with pharmacy phones red-hot with people asking for help. We said:

"... being inundated with requests for help has sometimes left us fearful that patients who were isolating and vulnerable could miss out.

"Volunteers helped save medicines deliveries for those who needed them most as the NHS does not routinely fund medicines delivery services".

"But incredible numbers of people across Surrey and Sussex came forward to pick up prescriptions for friends, family and neighbours who were unable to do so for themselves, while others have trained to work side-by-side with pharmacy staff to deliver prescriptions to a standard operating procedure. All helped save medicines deliveries for those who needed them most as the NHS does not routinely fund medicines delivery services."

Without help to distribute medicines and prescriptions Community Pharmacy teams might not have been able to see as many patients as they did for non COVID-19 symptoms, help take pressure off urgent care and GP services, been able to source and re-stock the essential items that everyone wanted to have at home, or deep clean their premises regularly to help keep patients and staff safe.



Brexit

This year we also had to contend with fears that the UK's exit from the EU would have wide-ranging implications for medicine supply and community pharmacy workforce. We talked to civic leaders and local emergency planners about how Brexit might affect community pharmacy across Sussex and Surrey, reassuring them that medicine supply issues were not a new phenomenon, that the Department of Health and Social



Care (DHSC), along with pharmacies, had well-established procedures to deal with them.

Overall, we stated that pharmacists would be working tirelessly to put patients first and help ensure they receive the best possible care. We also told them about the help they might be able to give us should Brexit have an impact on Sussex and Surrey's transport networks, workforces and communities.

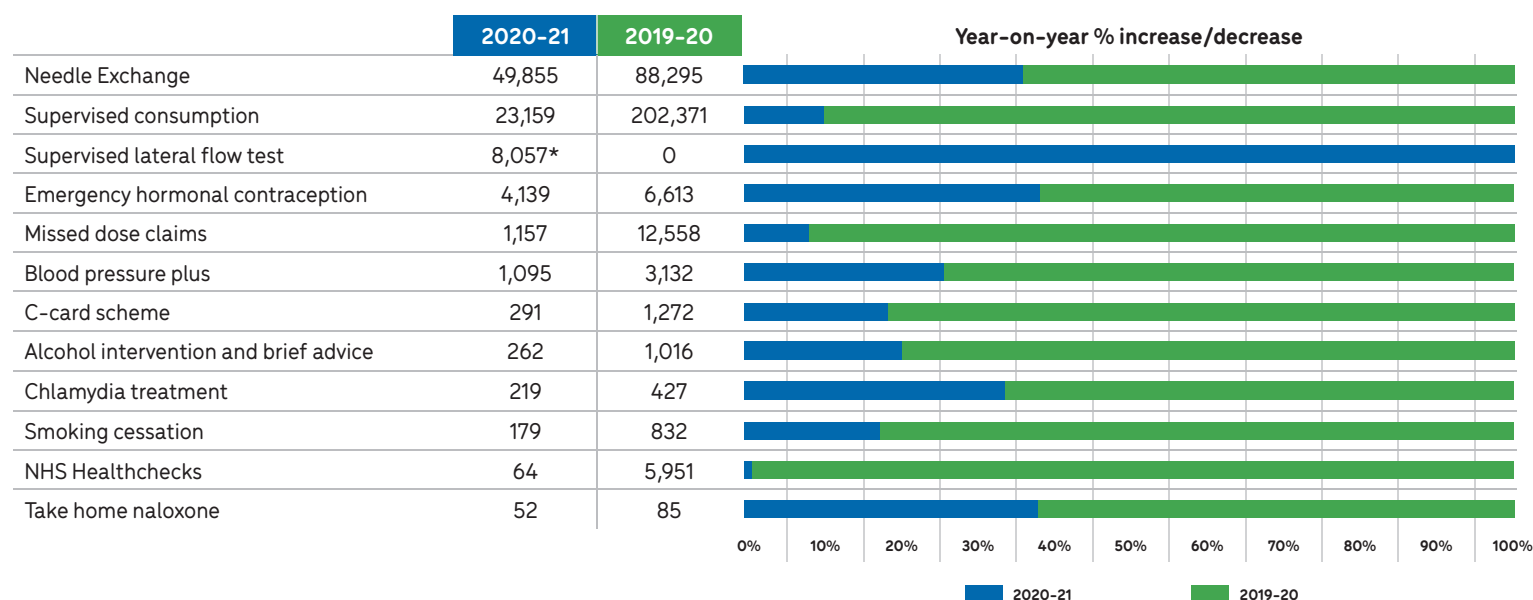
Public health and detection (not COVID-19) 2020-21

Throughout the year pharmacies still had to navigate the financial and operational challenges of business-as-usual, champion public health and identify and help those at risk of disease and ill-health.

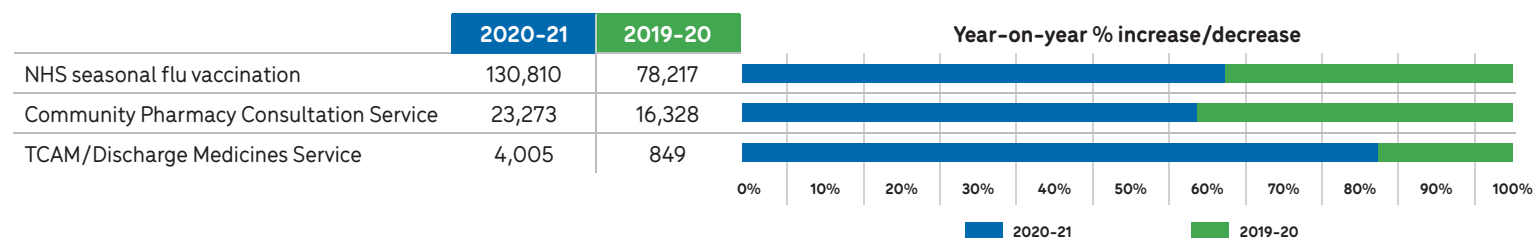
The impact of the pandemic on walk-in locally commissioned services can be seen here, compared to last year.

Thankfully all four of Sussex and Surrey's local authority public health commissioners put measures in place to protect pharmacy income from the drop in activity. This was typically a percentage of activity before the pandemic, tapered to coincide with the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions. The actual amount depended on the local authority who issued the pharmacy contract.

Over 10 locally commissioned public health services



A key role in primary care



Footnote:

Lateral Flow testing was first introduced as a locally commissioned service in February 2021.

Not all services are commissioned in all areas across Surrey and Sussex.

Pharmacies saw significant changes in work patterns due to the effect of lockdowns and infection control measures introduced to protect NHS frontline healthcare staff from community transmission of the virus.



When a PSNC interview in the Telegraph on 6 January sparked enormous press interest about community pharmacy's role in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, our staff team kept us in the spotlight by: drafting and sharing multiple quotes from LPC members; ensured a constant drip-feed of key information to journalists; shared positive messages about the various benefits we offer our communities and; briefed the first pharmacy sites in what to expect as the first to go-live and receive media interest.



Sarah Davis (East Sussex LPC) was in the car park at her work when she was interviewed by Heart FM to add weight to PSNCs national campaign calling for more pharmacy-led vaccination centres.



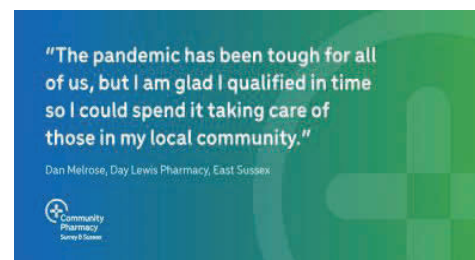
Did COVID-19 drive traffic to our website?

By July 2021, the number of users of our website went up by over 266 percent to 1,900 compared to February 2020. That traffic is partly due, we think, to contractors wanting more information about what's happening in their own communities during the crisis. Of the content on the website, it was information around key deadlines such as PQS and the distribution of our news bulletins that saw the most significant spikes in visits.

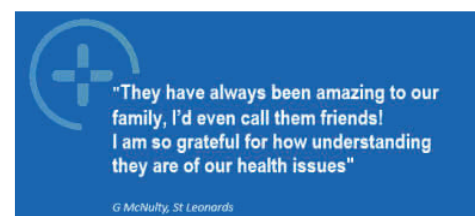


We were delighted to welcome Julia Powell to take over the reigns as chief executive officer

from James Wood on 22 February this year. She brings a wealth of experience and has a passion for contractor engagement and for the role. This will help us move forward across Sussex and Surrey, help embed us into new NHS structures, coordinate local elements of on-going national contract negotiations and see us continue in our journey to help community pharmacy reach its full potential.



Dan from East Sussex was a newly qualified pharmacist



Safe spaces and the 'Ask for ANI' codeword

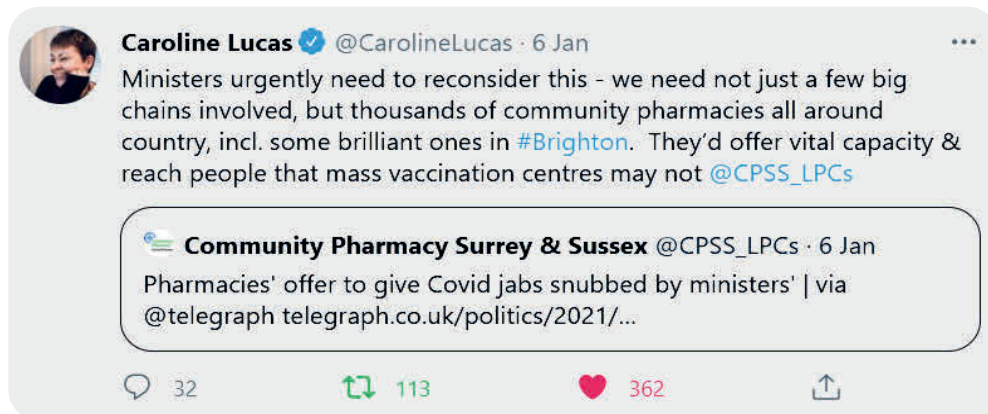
As people across the country were asked to stay at

home to tackle the virus, it became vital that whose home is not a safe space were able to seek help in easy ways.

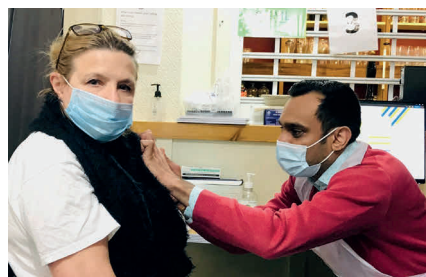
'Ask for ANI' (Action Needed Immediately) was developed by the Home Office to provide a simple and discreet way for victims of domestic abuse to access support from the safety of their local pharmacy. It is a voluntary scheme which many pharmacies across Sussex and Surrey signed up to and now display a notice about. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse which is why the Home Office considered pharmacies, used by people from all walks of life, as a suitable setting for the scheme.

In September we celebrated #pharmacyheroes by putting the spotlight on young people in community pharmacy – how they felt, and what they'd been doing to support their patients through difficult times.

G' a young adult carer heaped praise on her local pharmacy team



MP for Brighton Pavilion, Caroline Lucas, used Twitter to show her support for community pharmacy.

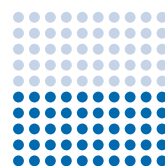


Prime Minister Boris Johnson MP paid tribute to the astonishing efforts of pharmacists like **Hardik Desai** who rallied volunteers to vaccinate 3,000 people by 10 February in his village hall in Ticehurst, East Sussex while keeping his pharmacy open.

Delivering value for money

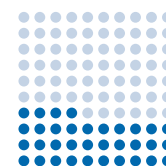
By continuing to work together, your LPCs have come through this year financially strong. In 2020-21, our income was £443,289 of which £415,679 was levy income raised from all NHS community pharmacy contractors in Sussex and Surrey. The rest came from partnership working and bank interest.

For every £1 of levy income:



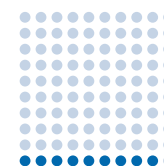
50p

Was spent supporting and representing contractors locally



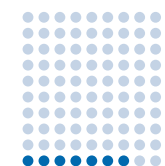
34p

Was sent to PSNC to help fund their work nationally



9p

Was unspent and added to LPC reserves. (To make sure we have sufficient funds for the future)



7p

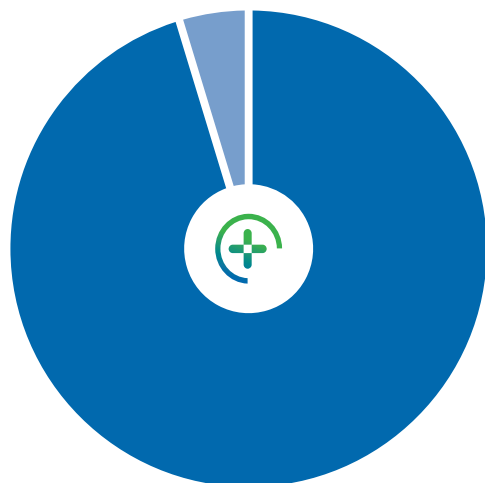
Was spent on making sure we are a well-run, accountable organisation that meets its constitutional duties

Our budget for 2021-22

Your LPC members have approved an operating budget and agreed the amount they will collect from contractors in 2021-22 (the levy) to fund their work to 31 March 2022. Committee members have noted that savings made during this year has helped financial reserves reach healthy levels. After debating the levy members agreed to reduce the contractor levy for 2021-22 through either a payment holiday (Surrey) or a percentage reduction (East and West Sussex), which still leaves the LPCs in excellent and robust financial positions.

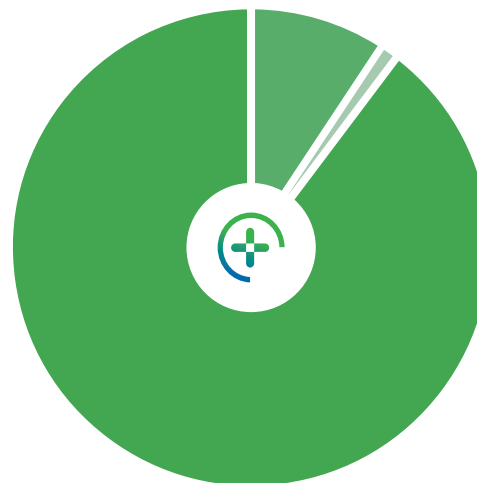
NOTE: Financial information shown here is for Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex and is consolidated across our three LPCs. Financial Accounts for each of our individually constituted LPCs for 2020-21 are available to view on our website - www.communitypharmacysss.co.uk - alongside the income and expenditure accounts for Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex. Other documents on the website highlight our three-way collaboration to deliver the strategy and operations of each individually constituted LPC through joint administration arrangements.

Combined LPCs total income for 2020-21



	£
Levy from 520 Community Pharmacy Contractors	415,680
External	27,609
TOTAL	443,289

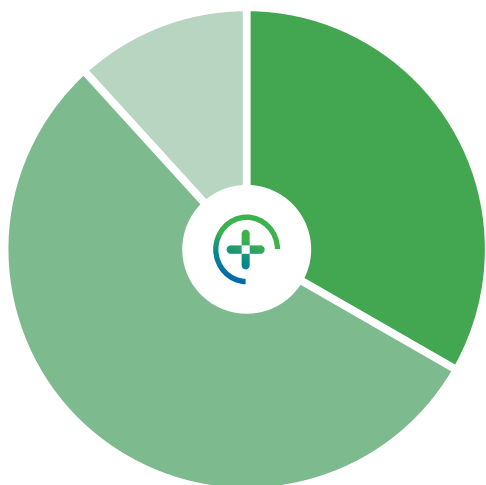
Local support and representation expenditure in Surrey and Sussex in 2020-21



(Funded by £178,186 from Contractor levy & £27,609 from external sources - industry partnership and commissioners.)

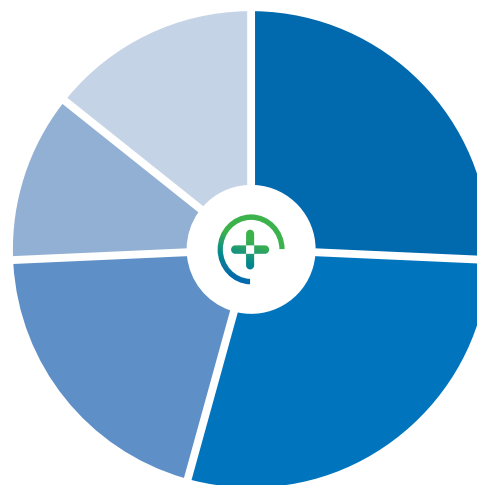
	£
Employment costs	185,968
Support costs	19,277
Travel & accommodation	550
Events	0
TOTAL	205,795

Combined LPCs total expenditure for 2020-21



	£
Local support & representation activities	205,796
PSNC (National)	142,660
LPC governance	29,307
TOTAL	377,763

% employment costs allocated to local activities in the operational plan 2020-21



	%
Contractor support	29%
Comm. & engagement	28%
Local representation	20%
Service development	11%
Management & admin	12%



Represent | Support | Develop | Deliver

Thank you

Our vision is to enhance the role of community pharmacy and to advance the role of our profession across Surrey and Sussex. We would like to express our gratitude to those who have supported and worked alongside us this year.

Commissioners: NHS England & Improvement in the South East, Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council, NHS commissioners in the five CCGs across Sussex and Surrey

NHS System Partners: NHS Digital, Kent, Surrey, Sussex Academic Health Science Network (KSS AHSN), Sussex Health and Care Partnership, Surrey Heartlands, Health Education England (Kent, Surrey and Sussex and London), PSNC, GPhC, RPS, CPPE, Surrey and Sussex Local Pharmaceutical Network, Healthwatch.

Produced by Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex on behalf of East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey Local Pharmaceutical Committees. August 2021. Photos by Hardik Desai, Hemel Chudasama, Sandra Lamont, Sarah Davis, Sohal Light Photography

www.communitypharmacyss.co.uk