

APPG for Prescribed Drug Dependence

Minutes of the AGM

19 October 2016 at 14:00

Held in Committee Room G, House of Lords

Chair: Paul Flynn MP

Attendees: Lord Patel
Earl of Sandwich
Dr James Davies
Dr Anne Guy
Harry Shapiro
Dr Alison Tierney

1) Welcome and opening remarks

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed members to the first AGM of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Prescribed Drug Dependence (APPG-PDD).

There was recognition by the Chair that the Group has had a very successful year and the members of the Secretariat were thanked for their hard work.

2) Apologies

The Chairman offered apologies from the following members:

Debbie Abrahams MP (Lab)
Steve Brine MP (Con)
Lord Crisp
Thangam Debbonaire MP (Lab)
Stuart Donaldson MP (SNP)
Helen Goodman MP (Lab)
Dominic Grieve MP (Con)
Prof Baroness Hollins
Caroline Lucas (Green)
Robin Walker (MP (Con)
Dr Phillipa Whitford (MP)
Luke Montagu (CEP)

3) Approval of minutes of the 2015 inaugural meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2015 were approved and there were no matters arising.

4) Election of Officers

The following officers were duly elected:

Chairman: Paul Flynn MP (Lab)
Co-chair: Oliver Letwin MP (Con)
Co-chair: Lord Patel of Bradford
Co-chair: Baroness Masham of Ilton
Co-chair: Earl of Sandwich

5) Update from the Secretariat

Dr Alison Tierney made a report to the meeting covering activity for the year, a copy of which can be found as an addendum to these minutes. Dr Anne Guy was nominated to replace Dr Tierney as Co-ordinator of the Secretariat and this was accepted by the meeting. A handover will be completed during November 2016.

Dr James Davies presented an update on the campaign for a national helpline for PDD written by Luke Montagu. A draft press release was also presented for consideration by the meeting.

6) AOB

There being no other business, the meeting closed.

Annex 1:

Report of the work of the APPG for PDD, July 2015 - October 2016

Dr Alison Tierney,
Coordinator, APPG for PDD
Council for Evidence-based Psychiatry
Secretariat to the APPG for PDD

1. Meetings

Since our inaugural meeting in June 2015 we've had two meetings, in November and May.

At the November meeting we had a presentation from Public Health England about their pilot projects which are designed to help local areas improve their response to prescribed drug dependence. We also had a discussion about the British Medical Association report on prescribed drug dependence, which had just been published, and the response of this group to that report.

In May the theme of our meeting was the apparent link between the rise in prescribing of psychiatric medication and the rise in mental health disability. Our keynote speaker was Robert Whitaker, who is a distinguished author in this field, and we had a panel of five senior and influential professionals, and one service user, who all responded to the keynote presentation.

Both meetings were fully booked and there was a great deal of interest in the work of the All Party Group.

2. BMA and helpline

Members of the secretariat have continued to work with the BMA to take forward the findings of its report on prescribed drug dependence. Both the BMA and this group are calling for a national helpline, and James will tell you more about that in a minute.

3. MP recruitment

We've also been working hard on recruiting more MPs to this group. A campaign has been set up to encourage people who have concerns about prescribed drug dependence to contact their MPs, and to ask their MPs to get involved in the All Party Group. The campaign has a Facebook page and some of our volunteers are helping to promote the campaign and respond to queries about it from the public.

We're hoping this campaign will result in more MPs joining the group, and raising awareness in Parliament of the problem of prescribed drug dependence.

I especially want to thank my MP, Thangam Debbonnaire, who isn't here because she's been appointed as a whip and is required to be elsewhere at this time. I contacted Thangam because of my concerns about my family's experience of prescribed drug dependence. Thangam has agreed to support us and to be a member of this group, and I'm extremely grateful for her involvement.

4. Change of coordinator

I will be stepping back from the role of coordinator of the All Party Group after this meeting. This is because my family commitments are very pressing at the moment.

Luckily we have a very suitable person who is willing to take on the role of coordinator.

I'd like to introduce Dr Anne Guy who is here today. Anne will be the coordinator once we've completed a handover, which is now in progress.

We're delighted that Anne is joining the secretariat. She has highly relevant skills and experience and we're very grateful for her involvement.

Anne has a doctorate in psychotherapy and counselling from the University of Roehampton, where she has also been involved in convening both postgraduate and undergraduate courses in counselling. She has worked as a volunteer for the Samaritans, and was chair of her local branch for three years. Prior to retraining as a psychotherapist and counsellor she was a senior administration manager in the financial services sector.

Anne has a professional interest in prescribed drug dependence as this is an issue which concerns many of her clients and colleagues. She's familiar with the growing body of research about the harmful effects of psychiatric medication so she is well informed about the issues which this group is addressing.

I'll remain involved with the secretariat on an advisory basis so that there will be a smooth transition of the coordinator role from me to Anne, and no disruption to the support which the secretariat provides to the group.

Now I'll hand over to James who will tell you more about the helpline initiative.

Annex 2:

Helpline for Prescribed Drug Dependence campaign update

MEMO

From: Luke Montagu, Secretariat for APPG for PDD

To: Officers and supporters of the APPG for PDD

Date: 13 Oct 2016

Re: Helpline for Prescribed Drug Dependence campaign update

In 2014 the British Medical Association began a project to gather evidence from a variety of stakeholders (including patient groups, charities, the Royal Colleges, the GMC and NICE) around the issue of prescribed drug dependence.

The BMA released a report in October 2015 which summarised the evidence it had gathered, and has since convened two roundtable meetings with stakeholders.

There was a high degree of consensus among stakeholders that various actions need to be taken to tackle prescribed drug dependence, including nearly unanimous support for the APPG's proposed national helpline.

This work is about to culminate in the publication by the BMA of three key recommendations around 24 October, including the call for a national, 24-hour helpline as proposed by the APPG. The other recommendations are for adequately resourced specialist support services and clear guidance on tapering and withdrawal support.

A helpline is urgently needed because:

- Prescriptions of benzodiazepines, antidepressants and opioid painkillers have risen dramatically over recent years
- For example antidepressant prescription numbers have increased by over 500% since 1992 to over 61m in England in 2015, with 11% of women and 6% of men taking the drug
- Millions of people are taking these drugs unnecessarily, costing tens of

millions to the NHS, and should come off with appropriate support

- Side effects and withdrawal effects can be very severe and last for months and sometimes years, often leading to disability and sometimes suicide
- There are no NHS services to help people withdraw from these or other psychotropic medications
- The small number of existing charities who provide support can no longer cope with the rise in demand for their services
- A national helpline and accompanying website would be an essential resource for patients, carers, families and doctors
- It would be a low cost, yet effective national response to a recognised public health issue. A national helpline would also be the first step towards the provision of local specialist support services, as it will also enable the NHS to gather data on the scale of the problem and highlight gaps in current local service provision. A national helpline would also get around the unhelpful response of ministers and the Department of Health over recent years

that – following the devolution of the NHS – prescribed drug dependence is now a matter for local authorities and CCGs.

The Secretariat for the APPG has been working with the BMA on this issue over the past two years, and believes that there is now an unprecedented opportunity to persuade the government to take action. We have also been working on a detailed scoping document which provides the rationale for such a helpline, including new evidence of demand based on recent analysis of withdrawal charity data.

We therefore propose the following:

- 1) The APPG will publish a press release on the same day as the BMA recommendations, supporting in particular their call for a national helpline
- 2) The APPG will write to Nicola Blackwood, Public Health Minister, proposing a national helpline and submitting a copy of our helpline scoping document

3) The APPG will also write to the other stakeholders involved in the BMA project, with the aim of encouraging them to sign a short consensus statement in support of a national helpline

4) The APPG will seek to meet with Nicola Blackwood and Jeremy Hunt to put forward this proposal in person

The Secretariat would therefore welcome comments from officers and supporters of the APPG regarding our plans, and in particular any further ideas for applying additional pressure on the government to support and fund a national helpline.

Luke Montagu 13 Oct 2016