



Pharmacists Defence Association
Old Fire Station
69 Albion Street
Birmingham
B1 3EA

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

14 May 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Arrangements for Safe Working in Community Pharmacy

We write further to your letter of 11 May to the PDA to which we thank you for your condolences for the loss of the lives of members within the pharmacy sector due to Covid-19.

As you have publicly recognised, community pharmacies have found themselves in the very front line of the war on the Coronavirus in the community. Community pharmacists and their teams have worked under increasingly difficult conditions facing ever larger numbers of members of the public many of whom are angry and frustrated and some of them are exhibiting symptoms of Covid-19.

It is now becoming clear that the situation with dwindling PPE is moving to an acute shortage situation and this will especially impact upon the community pharmacy setting. Following recent conversations with some of your officials and especially after the Prime Ministers announcement of changes to the lockdown rules, it is apparent that this now requires us to consider in much more detail the question of how the safety of staff working in community pharmacies can be maintained. Various government departments in other sectors have demonstrated how simultaneous engagement with trade unions and employers has been able to deliver innovation and solve problems. In so doing, such a three-legged stool ensures that whilst services are maintained, the safety of the employees at the coalface is not overlooked; indeed this is the approach taken by the NHS.

With 31,000 members, the PDA union, is the largest pharmacist representative body and with over 400,000 members, many of whom are community pharmacy team members, Usdaw is the largest trade union representing those working in retail settings. Together, we possess very significant expertise and competence in the areas of risk management and employee Health and Safety and as independent trade unions, we also have specific status under employment legislation.

We believe that it would be in the interests of all parties and especially the public relying on the service to establish such a trade union/employer and government arrangement for community pharmacy to address this issue.

Whilst we recognise that there are no easy options as we fight this virus, we have developed what we consider to be some good initial ideas on how to balance the needs of the public in this highly necessary service, the needs of the employers and the safety of the personnel upon which the community pharmacy service relies.

We ask that you arrange the first of such meetings at your earliest convenience and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Koziol
Assistant General Secretary
PDA Union

Daniel Adams
National Officer
Usdaw

