

To: Community Pharmacy Contractors

11<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Dear Colleague

### **ACCELERATED PAYMENT PROJECT (APP)**

In June 2012, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) commissioned the implementation phase of the APP initiative which aimed to move from a sixty day payment cycle with special advance arrangements to an actual payment within thirty days. A key objective was to develop new processes and have these operational by end of March 2013. The purpose of this letter is to provide an update with respect to the project and to recognise the very important work that all parties have undertaken.

Firstly, I want to pay tribute to the considerable effort of community pharmacists, individually and through their representative body, CPNI, their staff and the Business Services Organisation, to reach the intended goal of putting in place processes to achieve payment within thirty days. The current position is that we will achieve this goal by end of March 2013. I wish to take this opportunity to recognise the significance of the challenges that have been overcome and the commitment that everyone has made to bring the vision of a thirty day payment to a reality.

The pharmaceutical payment processes are complex and as we move from a sixty day payment schedule with special advance arrangements to a thirty day payment cycle, there is a need to manage new arrangements to ensure that a thirty day payment process is sustainable in the medium and longer term. We are constrained in managing these arrangements within financial years and, as this is a significant change process, and there is a need to build resilience into the revised arrangements, I am writing to signal that the intention is to initiate the 30-day payment cycle from June 2013, to make two payments to contractors in June and to remove the special advance at that time.

In preparing for this significant change, contractors are therefore asked to review their current special advance, compare against their monthly payment schedule and plan accordingly.

In the intervening period of time, the Business Services Organisation (BSO) has been asked to maintain the current process. It will be important, therefore, to use this time to consolidate the dual submission system and the improvements that have been made in the quality and

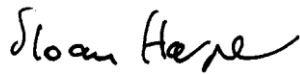
timeliness of submission. HSCB, BSO and CPNI will be monitoring and providing feedback which we trust you will continue to find helpful.

As a further support to the maintenance and resilience of the new systems, the HSCB has recognised the potential of community pharmacy hand-held scanners to improve work flow. We have, therefore, initiated a project to scope and develop a business case for the use of pharmacy hand held scanners to support efficient and safe processes within the pharmacy setting. This project has just recently commenced and includes representation from CPNI.

I can also confirm that, in order to support timely submission, the HSCB will continue to provide funding support for the courier service.

In conclusion, I am grateful for all the support and commitment to this significant change project and look forward to a smooth implementation in due course.

Yours sincerely



**Sloan Harper**  
**Chair of APP Implementation Board**

Cc

APP Implementation Board  
E Morelli - DHSSPS  
Dr N Morrow - DHSSPS