Govt refuses move to force industry to disclose payments

By Laura Murphy 19 December 2025

Campaigners disappointed as government opts for guidance not legislation for transparency on industry payments

The government has rejected calls for legislation requiring industry to disclose its payments to the healthcare sector, five years after a major review said statutory rules should be introduced.

It will produce guidance for both the pharmaceutical and medical devices industries instead. This will set out which payments should be reported, as well as the format and frequency of the reporting.

Campaigners told *HSJ* it is “deeply disappointing” that the government decided against “sunshine legislation” to compel industry and the health service to declare payments to healthcare organisations and clinicians.

This was one of the recommendations from the 2020 Cumberlege Review, which investigated three women’s health scandals. It found transparency of payments in the healthcare sector was needed to guard against both real and perceived conflicts of interest. There was concern that such conflicts could be encouraging the use of unsafe devices and practices.

Currently the pharmaceutical industry has a voluntary disclosure system run by an industry body. There is no equivalent system for the medical devices industry.

The government launched a consultation on the disclosure of industry payments to the healthcare sector in 2023. Yesterday it announced it had decided against a statutory route.

Instead, it will develop guidance for industry, setting out how industry will disclose payments and which payments should be disclosed. These guidelines for both the medicines and medical devices industries “will set out best practice for industry to follow” and will be published in 2026.

Kath Sansom, of the Sling the Mesh campaign, told *HSJ*: “It is deeply disappointing that five years after the Cumberlege review recommended a statutory requirement for industry to disclose payments to the healthcare sector, the government has chosen not to act.

“By rejecting sunshine legislation, the government has missed a vital opportunity to embed transparency and accountability in healthcare.”

Sling the Mesh was set up in 2015 to campaign about the risks of surgical mesh. It has been fighting for sunshine legislation, similar to that in the United States, where healthcare providers declare payments from industry in a single, open database.

The government argued that its “guidance-based approach will allow patients to benefit from industry reporting more quickly, without further delays that could have followed the introduction of legislation and the establishment of a government reporting and compliance system”.