

Commissioners: where to go next

Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs) are the local organisations representing community pharmacy contractors and a vital contact for commissioners. You can find out more from them about how local pharmacies could help to support self-care; and if you do decide to commission a pharmacy service they can help you to finalise everything from terms and service specifications to pharmacy assurance sheets and records. You can find your local LPC at lpc-online.org.uk.

NHS England guidance

NHS England has published guidance to help commission local community pharmacy services to support low income families or patients in areas of social deprivation to self-care. The guidance is accompanied by:

- A template service agreement and service specification
- A pharmacy contractor sign up and assurance sheet
- A service record form

Download the guidance and resources at psnc.org.uk/winter

¹Pharmacy in England: building on strengths – delivering the future. Department of Health, 2008

²Making the case for the self care of minor ailments. PAGB 2009

³Duffin, C. One in eight GPs have sought help for stress in past year. Pulse, August 2013

⁴Bayliss E, Rutter P. General practitioners' views on recent and proposed medicine switches from POM to P. Pharm J 2004; 273: 819–821

⁵Baqir W et al. Cost analysis of a community pharmacy minor ailment scheme across three primary care trusts in the North East of England. J Public Health 2011; 33(4), 551-5

⁶Partial Impact Assessment of proposals to expand the provision of minor ailment services. Department of Health 2008

⁷Minor Ailment workload in General Practice. PAGB

⁸Paudyal V, et al. Are pharmacy based minor ailment schemes a substitute for other service providers? Br J Gen Pract 2013; 63 (612), July 2013: 472-481

PSNC (the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee) promotes and supports the interests of all NHS community pharmacies in England. We are recognised by the Secretary of State for Health as the body that represents NHS pharmacy contractors. We work closely with Local Pharmaceutical Committees to support their role as the local NHS representative organisations. Find out more at psnc.org.uk



Minor Ailments: How pharmacy can reduce the burden and support self-care



Urgent and emergency care is under pressure, and in many cases patients attending these services have minor ailments that could be dealt with closer to home. In this flyer we outline how and why commissioners could harness the potential of their local community pharmacies to reduce pressure on Emergency departments, walk-in centres and GP and out-of-hours services.

The current situation: minor ailment consultations

Minor ailments are defined as common or self-limiting or uncomplicated conditions which can be diagnosed and managed without medical intervention.

- **8% of Emergency department consultations** involve consultations for minor ailments, costing the NHS £136 million annually.¹
- **One in five GP consultations** are for minor ailments with 90% of those consultations solely for minor ailments.²
- **43% of GPs are at high risk of burnout** and, with the current workload of general practice, this is not likely to reduce anytime soon.³
- **Around 80% of all care in the UK is self-care** and NHS England has highlighted the importance of improving the way in which patients use self-care support services to reduce dependency on emergency services.

How can pharmacy minor ailments services help?

Community pharmacies can and do help patients with minor ailments, but where patients cannot afford to buy treatments they often visit other NHS services to obtain them for free. NHS pharmacy minor ailments schemes allow pharmacies to treat patients with a range of agreed conditions, ranging from head lice to coughs and colds, at NHS cost. This can help to dissuade patients from attending GP practices and other services, offering a number of benefits:

1. Reduced demand for urgent care

Many pharmacies have extended opening hours and offering patients treatment can help to reduce demand on local urgent and emergency care services, leading to savings.

2. Release opportunity costs in General Practice

Practice staff can signpost patients for a consultation at their local pharmacy without an appointment; releasing GP capacity almost immediately.

3. Reduce costs and save time

Consultations for minor ailments in pharmacy are less costly than general practice consultations and have been shown to provide favourable health-related outcomes. Reducing the time spent by GPs on managing minor ailments would enable them to focus on more complex cases.⁴

4. Provide quality patient care

Community pharmacies are easily accessible with 99% of the population able to reach a pharmacy within 20 minutes by car and 96% by walking or public transport.¹ Patients are seen by qualified staff without the need for an appointment and many community pharmacies are open for extended hours, including Saturdays.

The NHS England evidence base report on the urgent care review concluded that: *'community pharmacy services can play an important role in enabling self-care, particularly amongst patients with minor ailments and long term conditions'*.⁷

The evidence for Minor Ailments Services

10 minor ailments account for three quarters of all minor ailment consultations and costs to NHS budgets, providing a manageable focus for service delivery.⁷

The Department of Health estimates **£300m** savings that could be made through wide-scale implementation of a pharmacy service.¹

58% of pharmacy minor ailments service patients questioned said they would have made a GP appointment if the service had not been available.⁵

68-94.4% of patients reported resolution of minor ailments following pharmacy consultations.⁸

The benefits of a minor ailments service commissioned through community pharmacy have already resulted in **national commissioning of the service in Scotland and Wales**.⁸