



The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

16th December 2022

Dear Secretary of State

As the collective representatives of NHS community pharmacies and the largest pharmacy operators in England, we write to assure you that as a sector we share your ambition for community pharmacies to deliver more support and clinical services for patients. Building on the agility, pace and efficiency we demonstrated during the pandemic, we are keen to deliver better support for patients and reduce pressure on NHS services. A good starting point would be a fully funded 'Pharmacy First' service, creating a vital front door to the NHS for patients and alleviating pressure on GP practices and A&E departments. But pharmacies could also be offering a wider range of services that support medicine optimisation, long term conditions, prevention and health inequalities. We would be delighted to discuss any of these ideas and develop them with you.

However, as a sector we are now at a fork in the road. We believe that you need to make a critical choice about the role you want pharmacies to play. The long term attrition of 30% real term funding cuts over the past 7 years is now leading to serious degradation of services to patients. Many pharmacies are now dispensing at a loss and facing a serious cashflow crisis which we fear if not addressed, will rapidly move towards many permanent closures. We fear that once they start, closures will be hard to stop, as the sector is now so fragile other pharmacies would struggle to pick up the slack. We are deeply concerned that this will put medicine supply at risk – with serious consequences for the millions of people who rely on dispensed prescriptions every year.

As pharmacy operators who are passionately committed to our patients we are asking you to make an urgent investment in our sector to help re-build capacity and sustainability and enable us to fulfil our potential to deliver more accessible and trusted services to patients. Further funding would be an investment in a highly efficient sector that can deliver cost-effective solutions for patients at pace.

We would very much like to meet to discuss what is needed to ensure that this vital sector can continue to deliver core services for patients and if we are properly resourced, move quickly to help support the NHS more widely.

Yours sincerely,

Seb James
CEO, Boots UK

Kevin Birch
CEO, Lloyds Pharmacy

Seb Hobbs
CEO, Well

Steve Anderson
MD, Phoenix UK

Sue Killen, Chair
Janet Morrison OBE, CEO
**PSNC (Pharmaceutical
Services Negotiating
Committee)**

Dame Barbara Hakin,
Chair
Malcolm Harrison, CEO
**CCA (Company Chemists
Association)**

Peter Cattee, Chair
Dr Leyla Hannbeck, CEO
**AIM (Association of
Independent Multiple
Pharmacies)**

Andrew Lane, Chairman
Mark Lyonette, CEO
**NPA (National Pharmacy
Association)**

CC Neil O'Brien MP, Minister for Primary Care and Public Health