



House of Commons Community Pharmacy Summit Summary

Opening statements from pharmacy leaders:

- Pharmacies have faced a 30% cut in funding since 2015, combined with workforce shortages, an 80% rise in locum pharmacist costs in the past year alone, and increasing instances of dispensing medicines at a loss.
- Newly released results from pharmacy pressures survey of over 6,200 pharmacies finds 71% are experiencing a shortage of pharmacists and 73% reporting longer dispensing times.
- Large multiple chains, such as LloydsPharmacy, have announced permanent closures, however, the impact on independent pharmacies is largely masked by pharmacists working overtime, or even without taking pay, to keep their pharmacy open.
- Pharmacies delivered 1/3 of COVID-19 vaccines through the pandemic – this shows how critical they are to good care and that they are able to provide further clinical services.

Roundtable discussion: main themes

Pharmacy First:

- A fairly-funded Pharmacy First service would enable community pharmacies to play a greater role as the first port of call for patients and the public seeking advice and help with minor ailments and other healthcare needs, thus reducing pressure on GPs and other parts of the NHS.
- PSNC submitted a business case for an England Pharmacy First service in 2021, but the service has not yet been commissioned despite supportive words from Ministers.
- This would mirror the success of similar Pharmacy First schemes already implemented in Wales and Scotland.
- GPs and the BMA see community pharmacies as part of the solution to alleviating pressure elsewhere in health and care system.

Can Pharmacy First be commissioned on a local basis through ICBs?

- Local and national agendas for pharmacies must be aligned as pharmacies rely on central NHS funding for more than 90% of their income.
- Community pharmacists are poorly represented on ICB boards making pharmacies not a priority for commissioning new services.
- Commissioning a piecemeal Pharmacy First scheme would be inefficient and slower than a nationally commissioned service, and would result in regional differences. In the future, a template that guides ICBs in commissioning of Pharmacy First and other services could be desirable, but a nationally commissioned service would have immediate impact and help the recovery in primary care.

Where are pharmacy closures happening?

- Many recent permanent closures have been among larger pharmacy chains, so have not been particular to one area.
- However, data indicates that there are more closures happening in areas of where social deprivation and health inequalities are already high, such as parts of North West and North East England.
- If financial pressures remain unchecked, further closures can be expected in all parts of England.



What can MPs do?

- Initiate direct contact with Ministers and the Prime Minister. This can include leading a delegation of local pharmacists to meet with the Secretary of State or Neil O'Brien MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Primary Care and Public Health).
- Raise these issues at Health Questions, or seek an adjournment debate on the issue. PSNC can provide briefings and assist your office with any necessary administration.
- Participate in constituency visits to local pharmacies.

Email George.Foote@psnc.org.uk for further briefings or assistance with the above actions.