

Briefing 002/24: What pharmacy owners told us in January 2024

As part of Community Pharmacy England's commitment to working more closely with pharmacy owners – listening to them better, as well as engaging more regularly via events and other channels – we sought input from the sector ahead of our [January 2024 Committee Meeting](#).

Between 5th and 21st January, our January Committee opinion poll was conducted to gather views from all pharmacy owners on a series of topical issues. The questions were focused on pharmacy owners' thoughts about preparations for the new Pharmacy First service and the outlook for their businesses in 2024. We also repeated the section tracking the ongoing financial and operational pressures facing the sector.

Thanks to all those who took the time to complete the survey. Here we summarise what you said.

Opinion Poll Results

More than 525 participants, representing 4,216 pharmacy premises in England, engaged with our January survey, giving a snapshot of thoughts from across a range of different pharmacy businesses across the country.

It should be noted that this polling was undertaken before the launch of the Pharmacy First service and as our training programme and the development of resources were still underway.

Pharmacy First

The 2024 January Committee Opinion Poll focused heavily on Pharmacy First and pharmacy owners express a constructive and positive attitude towards the new service. 97.3% of the premises represented by survey respondents have signed up to Pharmacy First. Furthermore, 96% report a positive attitude towards Pharmacy First.

Pharmacy owners say that preparations required for the service have been extensive. Primarily, preparations were described as intensive, time-consuming and difficult to fit in. Community Pharmacy England's resources were positively rated by more than half of the premises represented



– this is still lower than the rate of positive feedback we received from attendees at our series of Pharmacy First webinars.

When asked about what impact Pharmacy First will have on the sector, pharmacy owners believe that it will have a positive impact on staff competency and patient demand. However, concerns were raised around workload and IT access to GP records.

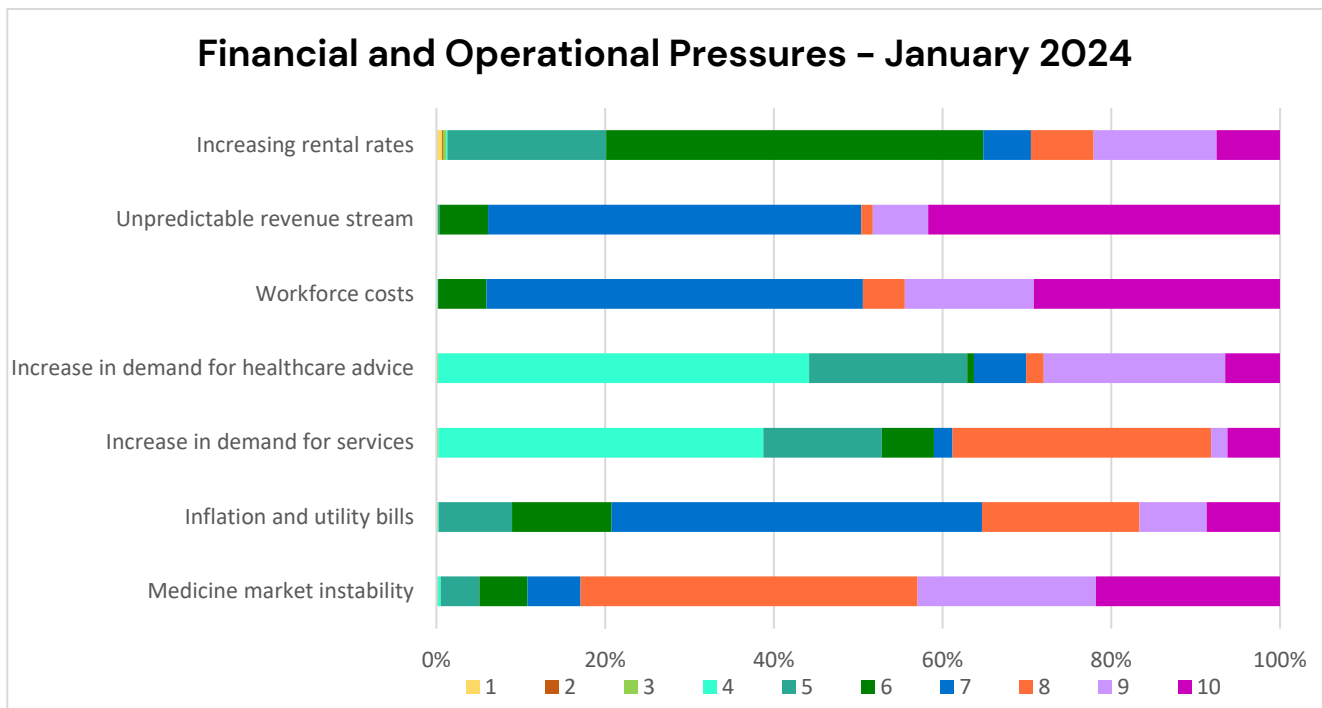
We also asked pharmacy owners about suggestions to improve preparations for Pharmacy First. Suggestions focused on competency, training, funding and IT.

Year ahead

For the year ahead, the majority of respondents express optimism: this is surprising given the ongoing financial pressures and operational challenges but may reflect the timing of the poll and optimism about the launch of Pharmacy First. However, a significant proportion express that they are either worried or extremely worried about the year ahead.

Financial and operational pressures

For tracking purposes, we also repeated the question on pharmacy pressures from previous surveys. Participants were again asked to rank pressures from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest pressure.





As in the 2023 November Committee Opinion Poll, medicine market instability has been ranked as the dominant pressure, followed by unpredictable revenue streams and workforce costs. The lowest ranking issues are increasing rental rates and an increase in demand for healthcare advice.

Using the data

The full polling results were considered by all Community Pharmacy England Committee Members, augmented with feedback from the Regional Representatives and LPCs throughout the meeting.

The findings are being fed into our ongoing work, including to press for funding uplifts and reviews of margin and medicines supply through our campaigning and influencing work. We are continuing to reference poll findings in our media and Parliamentary work, and poll results along with feedback from LPCs and Regional Representatives are used on an ongoing basis to inform work and strategy.

Next Steps

In 2024 Community Pharmacy England will remain fully focused on finding solutions to the complex challenges facing community pharmacy businesses. Our commitment to regular engagement work will to serve as an important tool for temperature-checking and consultation on key issues with all community pharmacy owners in the future.

These results are also available to LPCs through the members area on our webpage in the form of a dashboard report. We will also build on the pressures tracker that will make it easier to read developments and trends over time. Lastly, we are focused on increasing response rates.

Please note: we are not planning to hold a Committee opinion poll ahead of our April meeting in favour of running our annual Pharmacy Pressures Survey instead. More details about this will be released in the coming weeks.

If you have any queries or require more information, please contact: comms.team@cpe.org.uk
