

Open letter to political parties ahead of the General Election: a manifesto for community pharmacy

For decades, the 10,500+ community pharmacies in England have ensured patients can easily and safely access the medicines and healthcare advice they need.

As the healthcare needs of the population have evolved, so have community pharmacies. The recent launch of the Pharmacy First service in England is testament to the growing role that pharmacies can play in the nation's healthcare. Over 98% of pharmacies have signed up to the service and well over a million people have benefited from it since its launch, demonstrating the sector's willingness to step up and help relieve pressures elsewhere in the NHS.

As a recent Health and Social Care Committee report¹ recognised, pharmacy has fantastic potential to improve access to healthcare in the community. But, as the Committee also found, any further services can only be delivered in the context of fair, sustainable funding for the sector.

With investment, community pharmacy can do more, however the sector is in crisis.

Government funding for pharmacies has failed to keep pace with ever-growing NHS workload demands and spiralling costs. As the Health and Social Care Committee report notes, the current Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework is 'not fit for purpose' and requires a 'complete overhaul'. The pharmacy network is shrinking, and closures are disproportionately affecting the most deprived communities. This strain is in turn felt by patients and the public in receiving the care when and where they need it.

Without action, patients will find it harder to access the healthcare, expert advice and vital medicines they need.

The Health and Social Care Committee recognises these severe pressures and outlines a number of vital measures that any future Government must implement to stabilise the sector.

We would like to draw your attention to our manifesto for community pharmacy² which is in line with the recommendations of the Committee and sets out a six-point plan to:

1. Fill the funding gap, and commit to a long-term sustainable funding solution, so pharmacies can deliver more of the NHS care patients need.
2. Support and enhance the community pharmacy workforce, to ensure that pharmacists and their teams can continue to meet the needs of patients now and in the future.
3. Conduct an end-to-end review of the medicines supply chain, so that patients can access the medicines they need.
4. Rollout an enhanced Pharmacy First service for England, mirroring the highly successful approaches taken in Scotland and Wales.

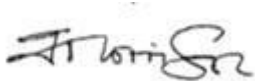
¹ Health and Social Care Committee, '[MP's hear that community pharmacy funding model is 'broken'](#)', 29 May 2024. The Committee's report is available in full [here](#)

² [A manifesto for community pharmacy](#), March 2024

5. Empower community pharmacists to do more, with an ambitious roadmap for independent prescribing.
6. Make pharmacies centres for public health, prevention and reducing health inequalities.

A vibrant pharmacy network can increase patient access, free up GP capacity, and support the NHS as it reduces the care backlog.

We urge all political parties to adopt the six-point plan outlined in our manifesto for community pharmacy.



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