

# Writing to MPs: Guidance

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## Background

Our ongoing priority is to make strong and urgent representations to Government and the NHS, seeking more investment and support for community pharmacies.

Following the Autumn Budget 2024, we are continuing our political influencing campaign to gain wide and vocal support from MPs and Peers from across all parties, and to ask for their help in pressing Government to act to protect our community pharmacies.

We have produced a specific [Autumn Budget 2024 briefing](#) which sets out the implications for community pharmacies. You may like to share this briefing in full when you write to your MP. We need to ensure MPs understand the critical situation for pharmacies: without urgent funding relief we can expect to see more pharmacies closing, meaning more people going without advice and medicines, and turning to other parts of the NHS.

Ongoing activities at a national level include hosting cross-sector events in Parliament, supporting Parliamentary questions and debates, coordinating letters to Ministers, and engaging with Government and party advisors. Support from LPCs and pharmacy owners at a local level remains critical, and your help to engage with MPs would be very much appreciated.

## Contacting your MP: Guidance

Personal letters and emails are much more powerful than a template letter in getting your MP onside, so we have deliberately produced this guidance rather than writing a template letter. You might like to follow the below format for your letter, or to pick and choose some of these sections to include in an email. If you don't have time to write, you could try contacting them on social media or email their office to seek a meeting online or at their constituency surgery.

Please see our website for specific [guidance on hosting an MP visit](#).

Some general points to consider in any letter:

- Always remain polite and professional in tone
- Focus as much as you can on patients, and what the pressures mean for them
- If you are aligned with the MP's political views, it may help to mention this

- Throughout the letter, try to emphasise that after years of flat funding, the community pharmacy sector is on its knees, and urgent action is now required
- Facts and figures can be very persuasive – we have lots on our website, or you may be able to use information from your own area or pharmacy
- We must also keep reminding MPs of the value of local community pharmacies – what you offer for your local community, and what is at stake (for patients, the public, your staff members, the local neighbourhood, and other parts of the NHS) if that is lost
- Letters should finish with an ask of MPs: see suggestions below

## 1. Introduction

Introduce yourself and your business and include the address/postcode of the pharmacy where you work. If you also live in the constituency, say so. If you have met your MP before, remind them of the encounter and thank them for any previous support they gave you.

## 2. Pharmacy First

Start with a positive, if you can. You could talk about the Pharmacy First service and the positive impact it is having locally in terms of reducing pressures on other parts of the health service and reducing waiting times/increasing access for patients. NHS predictions suggest that this and other pharmacy services – such as Blood Pressure Checks and access to Contraception – could free up as many as 10 million GP appointments annually. If possible, give some local statistics or anecdotes. Try to get across the message that this service demonstrates how pharmacies can help patients and the wider NHS, given the right funding and support.

You may like to include some of our general statistics as evidence for the positive impact that pharmacies have in their communities. Many of these are included in our recent [MP briefing](#).

## 3. Current pressures and workforce

Give an overview of the current pressures that you are experiencing and any changes you have had to make to how you operate. How are these impacting your staff, your business and your patients? What is the outlook, and what are your main worries?

You may like to include some statistics from our [Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2024 reports](#):

### **Key findings in Pressures Survey 2024: Funding and Profitability Report**

- Nearly 1-in-6 (16%) pharmacies may not survive another year or less due to financial difficulties.
- Less than 2% of the pharmacies represented in this survey report they are profitable.
- Almost two-thirds (64%) of pharmacies are currently operating at a loss.

### **Key findings in Pressures Survey 2024: Staffing and Morale Report**

- 70% of pharmacy owners report staff shortages, with about 1 in 10 forced to close pharmacies temporarily because of this.
- 86% of pharmacy staff report that staffing shortages are causing longer waiting times for patients, delaying timely access to medication and advice.
- Almost all pharmacy staff (92%) report struggling to cope due to workload, with 85% also pointing to medicines sourcing issues, and over half attributing it to patient abuse.

### **Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2024: Medicines Supply Report**

- Nearly all (97%) of pharmacy staff report patients being inconvenienced by medicine supply issues.
- 79% of pharmacy staff report that patient health is being put at risk due to medicine supply issues.
- 97% of pharmacy staff also report patient frustration due to medicine supply issues, with 84% saying they had experienced aggression from patients.

You could mention workforce issues here as well as cost and inflationary pressures. You may like to give some examples of cost increases such as rises in energy bills, inflationary pressures, increasing instances of dispensing medicines at a loss due to market and pricing issues. MPs appreciate data, so please do share any financial specifics that you feel able to.

You can also reiterate that pharmacy funding has been cut by over 30% in real terms since 2015, and mention that more than 90% of pharmacies' income comes from their NHS contractual funding. You can say that unlike other businesses, you cannot pass higher costs on to customers or patients, and should share your concerns about the sustainability and future of the business.

#### 4. Disruption to patient services

Give an overview of how, due to these pressures, patients are being impacted. Talk about which services you have stopped or will likely need to stop soon. You could talk about things like patients having to wait longer for prescriptions and any temporary closures. You may like to quote some statistics related to permanent or temporary closures. Our latest briefings covering this can be found on the 'Information for Politicians' section on our website [here](#).

#### 5. Risks

You could talk about the risks to your business and patients should Government decide not to step in to help. You could also convey that the pharmacy network is so fragile that permanent closures of large numbers of pharmacies are a risk, adding critical pressures to other pharmacies, and meaning patients could suddenly find themselves being directed to alternative locations for access to medicines and pharmaceutical services – which may or may not be easily accessible to them – causing major disruption at a primary care level with inevitable upstream impacts for hospitals.

#### 6. Conclusion

You could conclude with an emotional plea to urge your MP to act to help save your pharmacy and to ensure patients can continue to access the lifesaving medicines they rely on.

You could get across the value of pharmacies: millions of patients, their carers, and the wider public, rely on community pharmacies every day. Pharmacies are pillars of the community, as well as vital and accessible healthcare centres. With over 24 million people on at least one repeat prescription, pharmacies dispense more than 1.1 billion prescriptions every year.

You should ask your MP to take action by contacting the Minister for Care Stephen Kinnock MP, as well as the Health Secretary, Wes Streeting MP.

You may also like to ask MPs to support our wider needs for:

- A sustainable funding model for community pharmacies
- A full review of the medicines supply market, and short-term relief measures
- Investment in community pharmacy's clinical future
- A plan to safeguard the pharmacy workforce



Other things that you could ask your MP to do include:

- Meet with you for an urgent discussion, or visit your pharmacy to learn more
- Request a meeting with Ministers on behalf of local pharmacies
- Ask questions and raise the serious issues pharmacies face in parliamentary debates

**Please keep us informed of how your MP responds to you or be in touch if you need any further support with talking to your MP.**

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**If you have any queries or require more information, please contact:**

[comms.team@cpe.org.uk](mailto:comms.team@cpe.org.uk)