

MP Briefing: Unlocking the future of community pharmacy services

Overview

Community pharmacies are a vital part of our health service: **they are visited by approximately 1.6 million people every day, and they dispense over 1.1 billion prescriptions every year.** And community pharmacies could do even more to support patients, reduce pressure on the wider NHS, and help the health service to deliver better value for public money.

With the right investment and commissioning, **pharmacies could become the cornerstone of a modern, prevention-focused, and fully integrated primary care system**, delivering a range of preventative and clinical care closer to people's homes, **working at the heart of neighbourhood health teams** and in line with the Government's healthcare shifts.

However, community pharmacies are currently under enormous financial pressure, with an estimated **£2 billion annual funding gap** continuing to threaten their sustainability. **Pharmacies need a long-term sustainable funding and operational model.**

Following the recent Spending Review, which promised welcome further investment into the NHS, we are calling Government to **put community pharmacies at the heart of the upcoming Ten-Year Health Plan**, acting now to protect and expand the role of pharmacies in delivering a healthier nation and a more efficient NHS.



Community pharmacy has so much to offer to improve care for patients and the public, in their local communities, contributing to all of the Government's three healthcare shifts. Pharmacies have an astonishingly strong record on efficiency – the best in the NHS – and they have even more to offer if they can be properly supported, funded and integrated into primary care. But years of underfunding and real-terms cuts have left pharmacies struggling to cope, and even survive: we need the eventual outcomes of the Spending Review to put this right.

Janet Morrison, CEO, Community Pharmacy England



Our 4-point plan to unlock pharmacies' future

1. Support an economically sustainable community pharmacy sector – by closing the funding gap – to protect access to medicines and services

- Ensure all community pharmacies have access to **long-term economically sustainable funding to assure access to critical medicines and services for all.**
- **As well as supporting a sustainable pharmacy network, improve medicines supply chain resilience** to ensure that all community pharmacies and their patients can access the medicines they need, when they need them.

Notes:

- A fully funded community pharmacy network, delivering a range of clinical services, **could deliver some £34 billion in value to society, annually. That is £13 of value, for every additional £1 spent.**
- An **NHS-commissioned report** estimated that the full economic cost of delivering NHS pharmacy services was **£5 billion in 2023/24.**
- Current funding falls **£2 billion short annually**, even after recent uplifts — and this gap does not account for rising costs and inflation.
- Since 2015, the sector has **delivering 64% in efficiencies** – coping with a 45% rise in workload, alongside rising costs and inflationary pressures.
- With the combined pressures on community pharmacy, **over 1,000 pharmacies have closed, reducing access and increasing pressure on other parts of the NHS.**

2. Reform preventative healthcare by putting community pharmacies at the heart of prevention and Neighbourhood Health Services

- **Commission a wider range of public health and clinical services through community pharmacies**, who have more access than any other healthcare provider to those living in the areas of highest deprivation.
- In particular, community pharmacies should be commissioned to **provide a wider range of NHS vaccinations, as well as a full menu of open-access structured healthy lifestyle services such as weight management and helping people to quit smoking or use of vapes.**
- Our economic analysis shows that commissioning a wider range of vaccination

services from community pharmacies would deliver a **benefit to society of more than £84 million**, for a cost of around £16 million. Investment in an open access pharmacy smoking cessation service would deliver **£375 million per year in value, for a cost of under £10 million**.

- **Integrate pharmacies fully into Neighbourhood Health Teams**, putting in place capacity, workforce and estates strategies to ensure pharmacies can reach their maximum potential as part of these teams.

3. Deliver care closer to home by empowering community pharmacies to operate at the top of their skill level, building on the potential of existing services

- Build on the success of **Pharmacy First**, expanding it into a **Community Pharmacist Prescribing Service** – as set out in the Labour Party Manifesto – to gain maximum efficiencies from the use of prescribing pharmacists in community pharmacies and reduce pressure on GPs and A&E. **This would build on the 38 million GP appointments that pharmacies already save every year.**
- **Build on other community pharmacy clinical services to improve patient outcomes and deliver efficiency gains for the NHS.**
- For example, the **Blood Pressure Check service**, which helps detection of hypertension, should also help identify other cardiovascular conditions and should transition into a service which enables pharmacists **to prescribe for and manage hypertension**.
- **The Pharmacy Contraception Service should be developed into a more comprehensive women's health service**, for instance widening access to long-acting reversible contraception (e.g. injectable contraceptives) and to menopause advice, with prescribing of HRT.

4. Use community pharmacies to maximise the value and impact of NHS medicines

- **Maximise the potential of the pharmacy New Medicine Service and the Discharge Medicines Service** to improve patient adherence to their prescribed medicines and reduce the likelihood of recurrent presentations and admissions to hospitals. **Our economic analysis shows that the New Medicine Service could deliver £23 billion in value each year, for a cost of just £307 million. That's a staggering return on investment of 75:1.**

- Commission structured medication reviews, a deprescribing service and adherence support services from community pharmacies, to ensure better outcomes from medicines use and value for money for the NHS on its medicines spend.
- Empower community pharmacists to manage medicines shortages and optimise medicines use, including **allowing them to make medicines strength and formulation substitutions**, where appropriate and necessary due to shortages.

Our vision for the future

Community pharmacies can do more to **improve the public's health and prevent ill-health**, helping Government to shift healthcare to prevention, rather than cure.

Pharmacies have much to offer **Neighbourhood Health Services, bringing care closer to home**. They could provide a wider range of clinical services close to patients' homes, working across care pathways as part of a fully resourced and integrated neighbourhood team.

And pharmacies can do much **to optimise the use of medicines** – ensuring that everybody taking a medicine gets the most benefit possible from it, and that the NHS gets value for money on the money it invests in medicines.

See more details on our attached infographic.

Next steps

We are asking all MPs to:

- Support calls for investment to give pharmacies a long-term sustainable future.
- Champion the role of pharmacies in NHS transformation.
- Advocate for expanded commissioning of pharmacy-led services.

Further information

Community Pharmacy England represents all 10,400 community pharmacies in England. We champion community pharmacies and represent them in negotiations with the Government and the NHS. We are responsible for negotiating the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) under which all community pharmacies operate.

For more information or support, please contact: comms.team@cpe.org.uk