



Pressures Survey 2025

Funding and Profitability Report

Community Pharmacy England's 2025 Pressures Survey shows that pharmacies continue to face a range of critical challenges, from ongoing medicine supply issues and workforce shortages, to mounting operational costs and inflationary pressures. The ongoing financial pressures are limiting the ability of pharmacy owners to keep their pharmacy businesses afloat and deliver a full range of services for patients.

The scale of the financial crisis facing the sector is clear. Responding to the Pressures Survey, 99% of pharmacy owners identified finances as their top concern. Rising operational costs, inflation, staff wages, and unpredictable income are collectively undermining their ability to operate sustainably.

- Only 6% of pharmacy owners report their business is profitable
- 51% are operating at a loss
- 45% of pharmacy owners are using personal savings to keep their businesses afloat

The community pharmacy sector in England has seen a 30% real-terms funding cut over the past decade, resulting in significant financial strain. With around 90% of most pharmacies' income coming from dispensing medicines and delivering NHS services, rising cost pressures are threatening their ability to continue offering vital patient care.



Things are so tough right now. I've had to borrow money from family and friends just to pay wholesaler bills, and some wholesalers have even blocked me due to outstanding debts. My father passed on this pharmacy to me, but it wasn't like this during his time when the business was more sustainable, now it's the worst we've ever seen.

Pharmacy owner, London, England

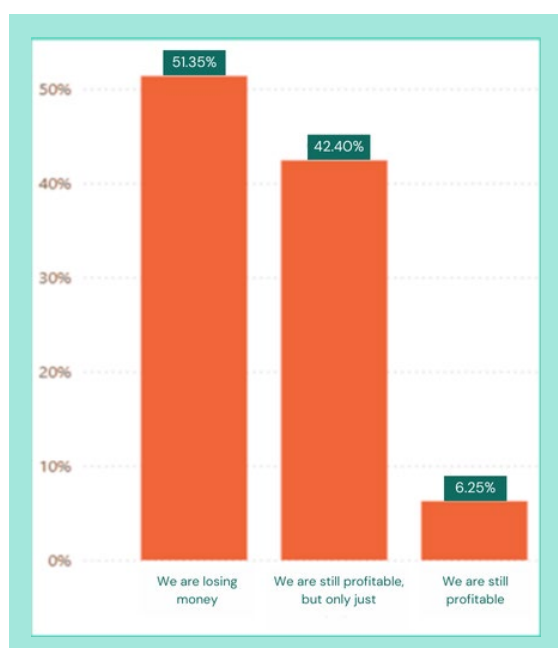
In response, Community Pharmacy England is calling on the NHS and Government to further increase core pharmacy funding to reflect the true cost of delivering services and to secure the long-term sustainability of the community pharmacy network.

Summary of Key Findings

Profitability and threats

- Pharmacy businesses are under serious threat with half of pharmacy owners (51%) telling us at the start of this year that they are losing money.
- 42% said they were just about breaking even, whilst only 6% of pharmacy owners represented reported that their business was profitable.

How profitable is your pharmacy business at present?



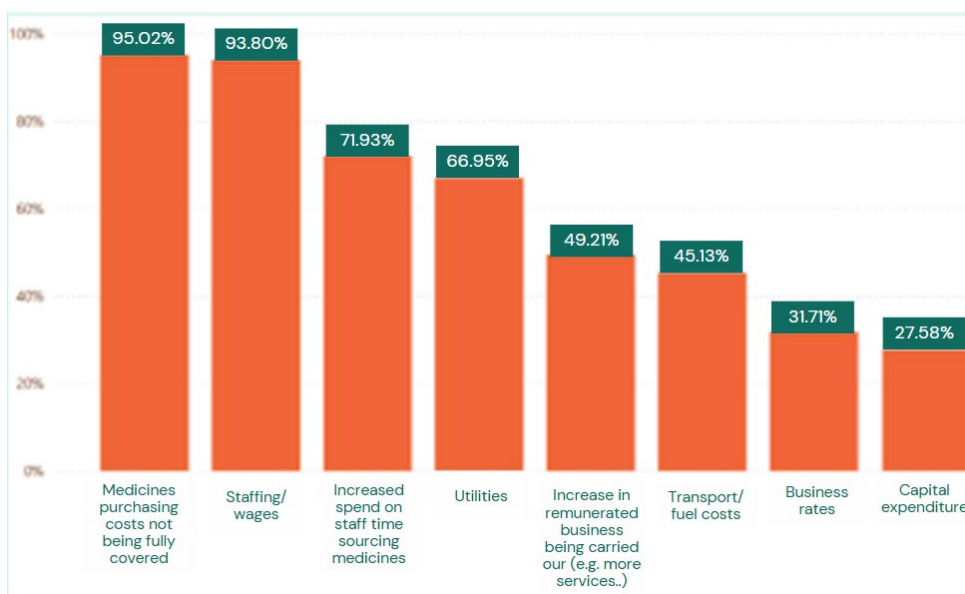
I have spent 48 years in pharmacy. My lifestyle is decimated. Every possession, including my home and pension, are covered by a fixed and floating debenture – everything is secured on the pharmacy.

**Pharmacy owner,
North East of England**

Rising costs threaten sustainability

- 90% of pharmacy owners were facing significant cost increases compared to the same period last year.
- Pressure on pharmacy businesses was driven by unreimbursed medicine costs (95%), increased wages (94%) and inflationary costs and the impact of medicines shortages (72%).
- These pressures as well as other factors such as rising utility costs (according to 67% of pharmacy owners), transport/fuel costs (45%), and increases in remunerated business activities e.g. more services and dispensing (49%) as impacting the financial sustainability of community pharmacies.

What have been the main drivers of any cost increases?

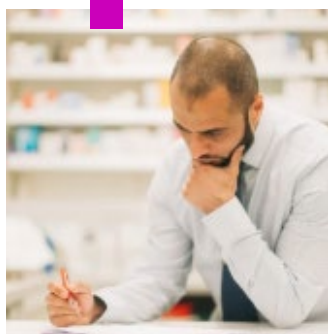
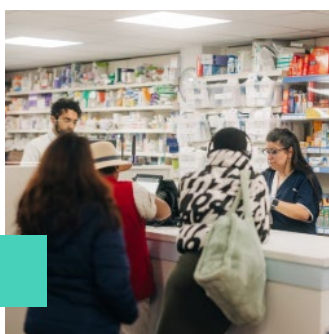


I saved all my life to own a pharmacy, and now at 48, I live in constant worry of losing everything. I should not be working unpaid and exhausted. I am trying to stay cheery for my team while quietly panicking and have many sleepless nights.

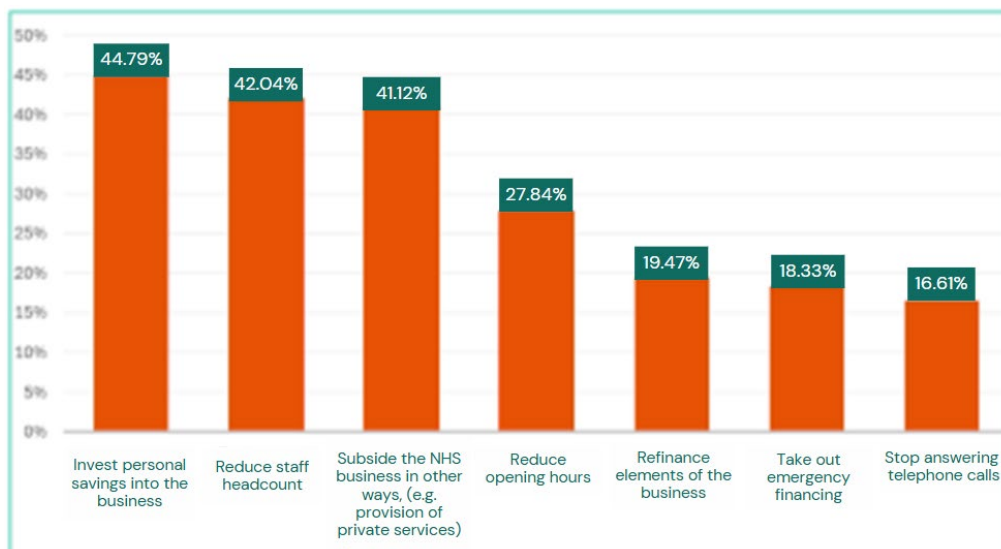
Pharmacy owner, North East of England

The Survey findings demonstrate the scale of challenges and the very difficult decisions that pharmacy owners are making to keep their businesses open and keep serving patients in their communities.

- 60% of pharmacy owners took no salary last year.
- 45% of pharmacy owners had to invest personal savings into their business to keep it going in the past year.



Have you had to do any of the following in order for your business to survive the past year?



- 37% of pharmacy owners had been unable to pay wholesaler bills on time, and 40% had not been able to pay other bills on time.
- 23% report that their pharmacy business has been subsidised by other parts of a larger business.



I am not taking a salary and I am working circa 70 hours per week. I am here every single day and I have no choice but to do this to keep the pharmacy running

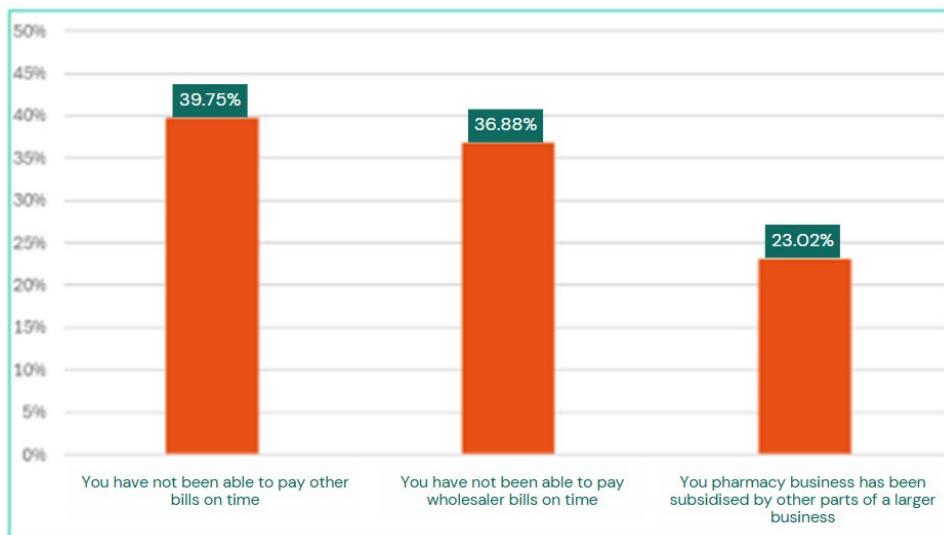
Pharmacy owner, South West of England

I'm 65, had bypass surgery and stress-related mental health issues but still work 50+ hours per week to stay afloat

Pharmacy owner, South East of England



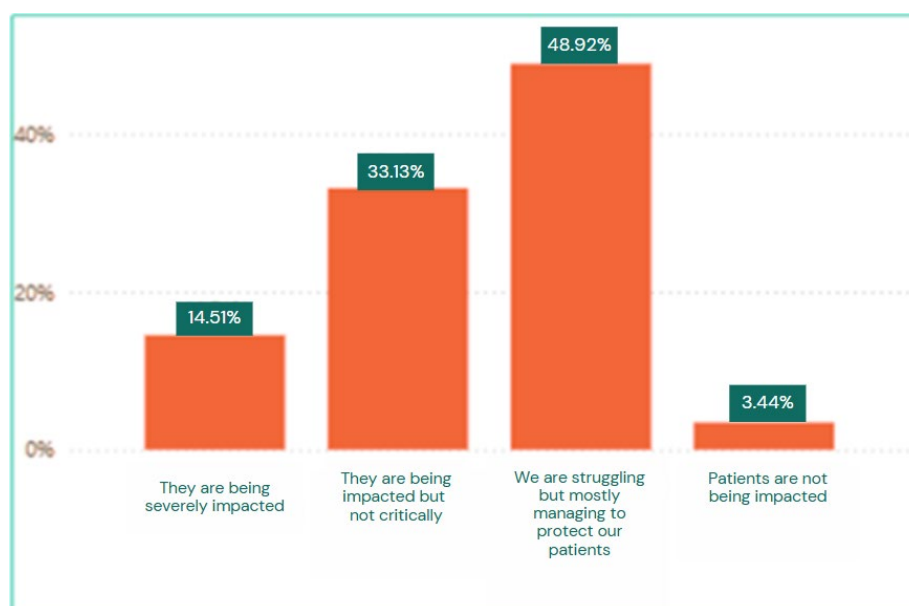
Have any of the following applied to you in the past year?



Impact on patients and staff

- 49% of pharmacy team members said they were struggling, but mostly managing to protect patients.
- 48% indicated that patients were being negatively affected by the pressures on their pharmacy.

Are patient services being negatively affected by the pressures?





We are doing all that has been asked of us but we will not be able to continue unless funding improves. I don't run a charity, and the time is coming shortly when I will have to decide if closing up is the only option left. I have been a community pharmacist for 35 years, giving my all, and feel nothing but despair.

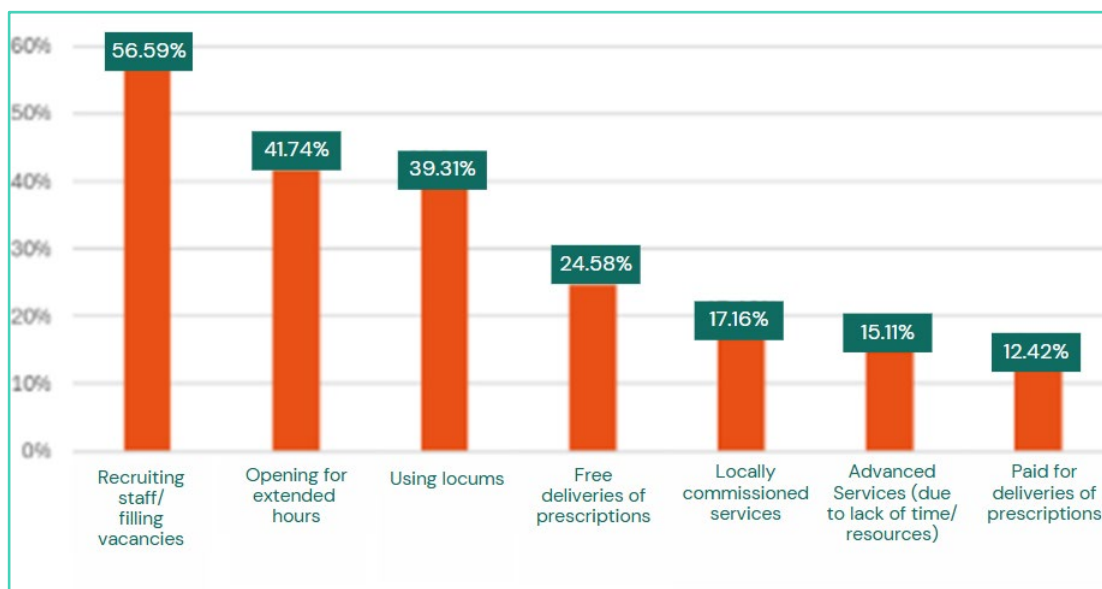
Pharmacy owner, South East of England

These pressures directly affect the range of services pharmacies can provide, as well as the time and resources they are able to put towards supporting patients.

- Just over half 57% of pharmacy owners had been forced to stop recruiting staff or filling vacancies in the past year, despite ever more being asked of pharmacies.
- Almost half of pharmacy owners (42%) also reported that they had reduced their opening hours by stopping opening for extended hours.
- A quarter of pharmacy owners (25%) have already stopped providing free prescription deliveries, which often benefit vulnerable or housebound patients, but are not funded by the NHS.
- 17% had stopped delivering locally commissioned services (these often include public health services) in the past year.
- 15% had already stopped providing some national services (which include Pharmacy First, flu vaccinations, and the New Medicine Service) due to lack of time and resources.



Have you had to stop doing any of the following in order for your business to survive the past year?



I have reduced supplementary hours, so patients are having to visit other pharmacies when we are closed. We've cashed in our pensions, we can't pay ourselves, just the staffs' wages to keep afloat.

Pharmacy owner, North East of England



Pressures Survey background

Community Pharmacy England represents all 10,400 community pharmacies in England.

Each year, it conducts the Pharmacy Pressures Survey to monitor and track the extent of the financial and operational challenges facing the sector.

This report was produced based on the results of the 2025 Survey which included two parts: an online questionnaire for pharmacy owners (or head office representatives) and another for pharmacy team members. This year more than 800 pharmacy owners,



representing approximately 4,300 pharmacy premises, and more than 1,600 pharmacy team members shared their views.

The results once again highlight the severe and ongoing hardship within the sector, with many pharmacies struggling to cope with unsustainable cost increases, mounting financial pressures and concerned about their ability to operate.

Following the survey, which was conducted between January and March 2025, the Government agreed a significant financial uplift to pharmacy funding. However, the increase still does not cover the full funding gap for pharmacies – in fact it falls some £2 billion short – and this is reflected in our further polling of pharmacy owners after that deal had been announced.

The Future: Financial pressures remain

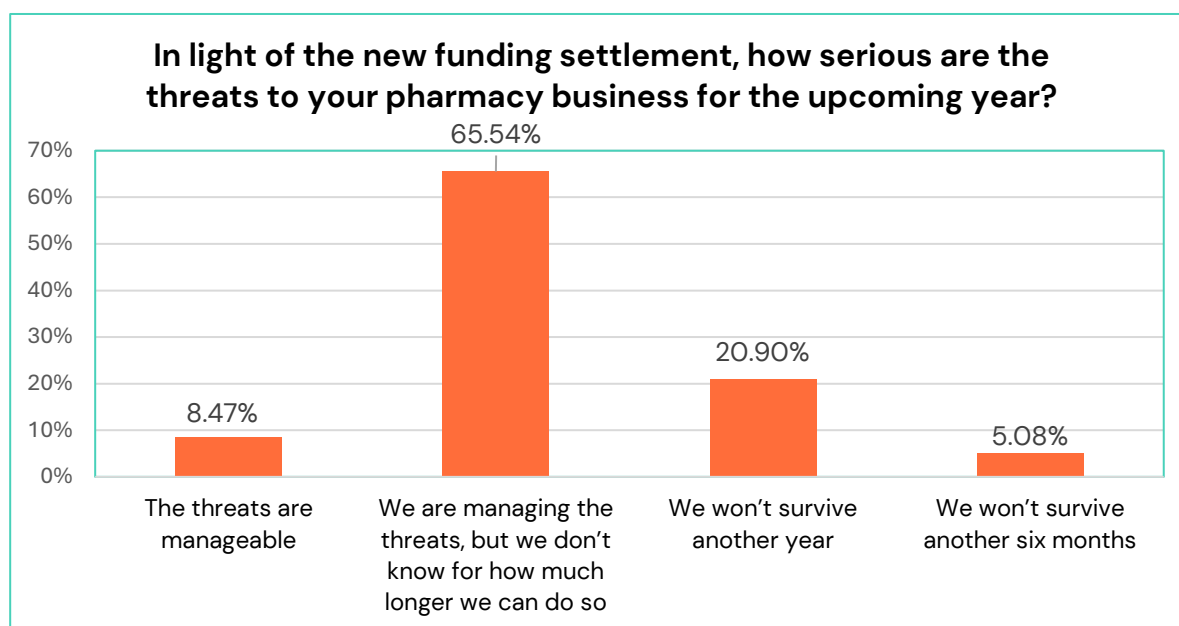
This year's Pressures Survey was conducted prior to the announcement of Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) funding settlement for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Pharmacy owners were polled following the settlement¹ and asked to reflect on its impact on their businesses. While the CPCF settlement includes a welcome funding uplift expected to deliver £841 million to pharmacy owners in 2025/26, most pharmacy owners indicated that this investment does not address the full financial pressures they are facing.

In the light of the new funding settlement:

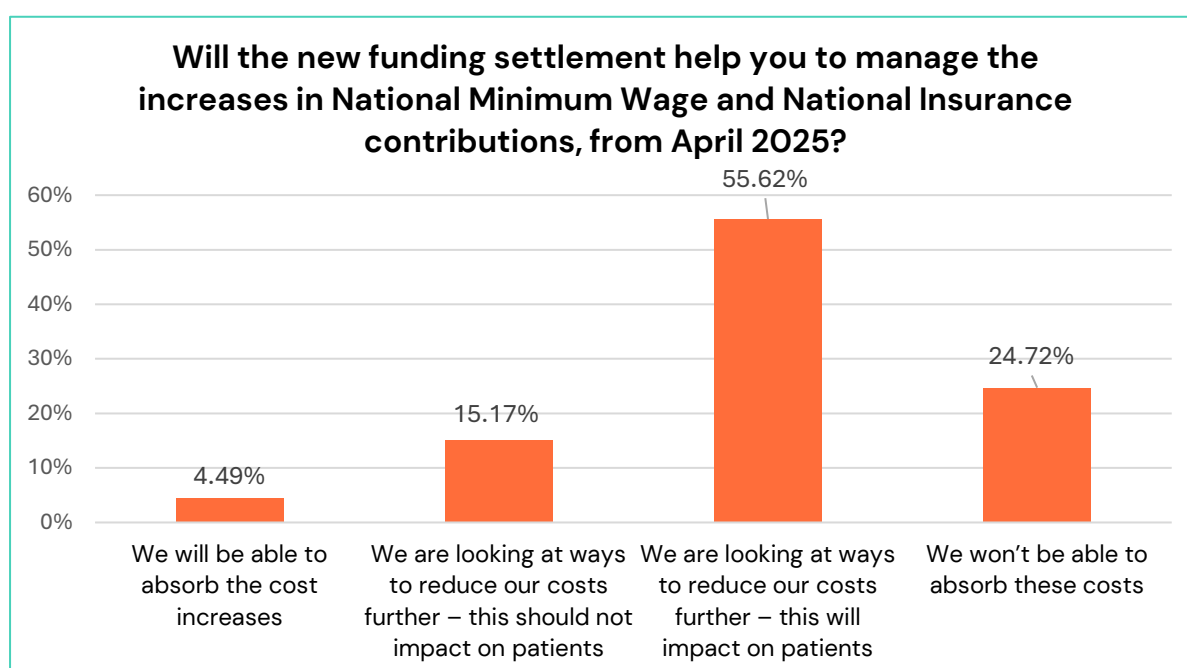
- Two-thirds (66%) of pharmacy owners say that they are managing the threats, but don't know for how much longer they can do so.
- A fifth (21%) say that they will not survive another year.
- Just 9% of pharmacy owners say the threats to their business would now be manageable.

¹A further opinion poll of pharmacy owners and head office officials run between 16th and 30th April 2025. It had 370 respondents representing 3,517 pharmacies (c34% of all community pharmacies in England).



Pharmacy owners don't want to impact their patients, but it appears inevitable. When asked how they expect to manage the increase in National Minimum Wage and National Insurance contributions from April 2025:

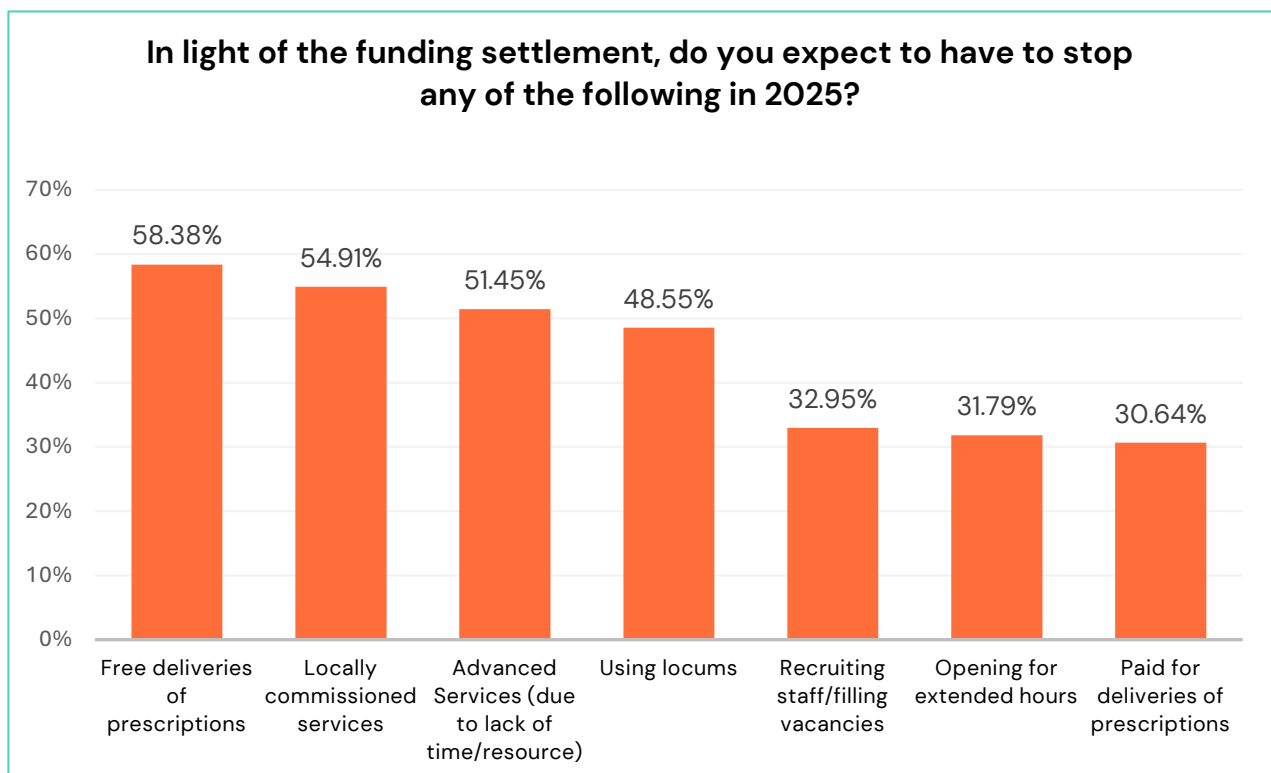
- Over half (56%) say that they are looking at ways to reduce their costs further, which will have an impact on patients.
- While 15% say that they are looking at costs reduction that won't impact patients.
- Only 5% say they will be able to absorb the cost increases.



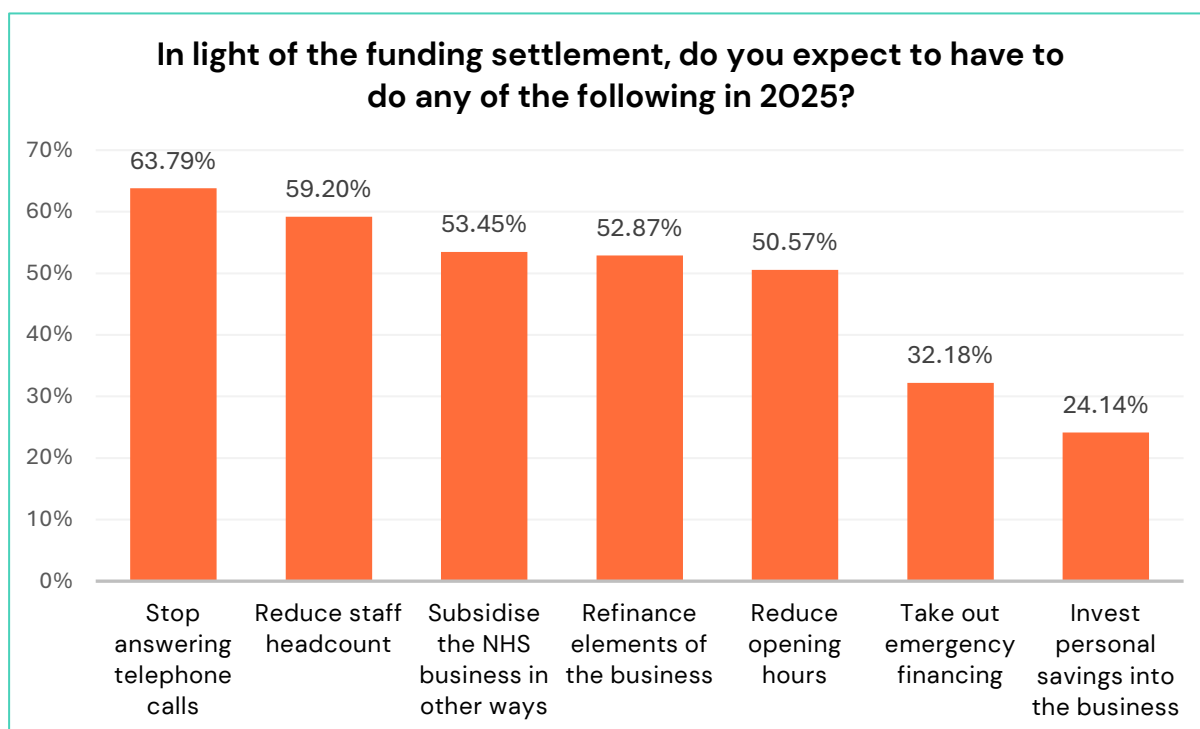


In response to the new funding settlement, pharmacy owners are considering or already taking actions to protect their businesses.

- 58% say that they plan to stop free deliveries of prescriptions.
- Over half (52%) indicate they will stop providing national Advanced Services.
- Almost a third (32%) say they will have to cut back on extended opening hours.



- Almost two-thirds (64%) of pharmacy owners say their team will have to stop answering telephone calls.
- 59% expect they will need to reduce staffing, further limiting their ability to provide vital NHS services.
- Over half (54%) expect that they will need to find other ways of subsidising the NHS side of their business this year.



Case studies

Community pharmacy owners have shared the toll financial pressures are taking on them:



Owning a community pharmacy business in 2025 is an intensely stressful experience. It is an endless juggle between trying to manage your patients, who are quite rightly upset and angry – for instance where we can't get hold of medicines for them – and trying to get everything else done. My wife and I both work in our pharmacies and we often have to operate a night shift pattern so that we can get through everything – one of us is in the pharmacy late at night, while the other is home with the children, and the other then starts in the early hours of the morning.

It's exhausting: we can barely have any sort of a personal or family life. And that's before you consider the financial worries – the wondering every month if we will be paid enough to cover our wholesaler bills; the concern that if another burned out member of staff leaves it will take us months and months to recruit again; and the lack of clarity about the future, as we only have a one-year funding settlement.

Anil Sharma, independent community pharmacy owner in the East of England



I talk to lots of pharmacy owners across England on a regular basis, and many of them, like me, are in a terrible financial position. For decades we have done everything the Government and NHS have asked of us – dispensing many more prescriptions year on year, finding ways to be efficient about that, and vastly expanding the range of clinical services that we offer. Yet month in and month out, the numbers simply do not add up.

I run two pharmacies and I've been forced to make tough decisions about reducing our opening hours or cutting staff numbers. It can't be right that people delivering high quality NHS services, with a very deep focus on their patients, are facing financial ruin. And this is not isolated cases – many hundreds of pharmacy owners like me are having to take steps to save their businesses, and of course this is taking a toll. I often receive late night messages from fellow pharmacy owners in despair – it's frightening, and they just don't know what to do anymore. Dedicated healthcare professionals should not have been put in this position.

Mike Hewitson, independent community pharmacy owner in the south of England

Conclusions / recommendations

Community pharmacies continue to face serious and ongoing challenges, with little improvement since the results of the [Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2024: Funding and Profitability Report](#). Persistent medicine supply issues and rising costs are putting financial pressure on businesses, with many pharmacy owners warning their pharmacies are no longer sustainable.

Years of underfunding and real-terms cuts have left the sector struggling to cope with growing demand, staffing pressures and worsening morale. These pressures are still forcing many pharmacies to reduce services and cut opening hours available to patients. The impact on patient care remains evident: patients are subjected to longer wait times, fewer services, and challenges accessing the help they need.

While the recent changes to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework for 2024/25 and 2025/26 offers a starting point for change, there is still a long way to go to reverse the damage and restore stability across the sector.

An Independent Economic Review, commissioned by NHS England to assess the community pharmacy sector's funding needs, identified a £2.3 billion annual funding shortfall for 2023/24. Long-term government funding must be aligned with this review to reflect the real costs of delivering services and operating and give pharmacy owners the confidence to invest in their businesses and essential patient services.

Community Pharmacy England is calling on the NHS and Government to increase core funding to reflect the true cost of delivering services and to secure the long-term sustainability of the community pharmacy network.

Reflecting on this year's Pressures Survey results, Community Pharmacy England CEO Janet Morrison said:

"Community pharmacies across England have been under unbearable pressures for a number of years now. Rising costs across the board, combined with funding that was decreasing in real terms, have left pharmacy owners making impossible choices – for larger companies this has meant closures of pharmacy branches, and for smaller independent pharmacies we have seen enormous personal tolls, and increasing numbers of business insolvencies. All of these have had unavoidable but deeply concerning impacts on patients, as the results of our Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2025 show.

The survey also reveals a deeply concerning trend of pharmacy owners fighting to keep their business afloat, and facing disastrous personal financial situations as a consequence. It is unthinkable that entrepreneurial, patient-facing health professionals who have spent their lives providing high quality NHS services, are being left in this very desperate position. Pharmacy owners should not be subsidising NHS services from their own pockets. They should be focusing on supporting patients and planning for the future, not worrying about how to keep the lights on.

Despite a very welcome funding uplift this April, our latest polling results from that month show that the pressures are ongoing. This remains a frightening time for very many pharmacy owners, who have put their personal financial situations on the line to keep serving their patients and local communities, and we can expect to see further steps taken by pharmacies to survive, with an inevitable and negative impact on patients and other primary care providers."

