



Staffing and Morale Report



Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2025

Pressures Survey 2025: Staffing and Morale Report

Summary

Community Pharmacy England's 2025 Pressures Survey highlights increasing staffing pressures across community pharmacies in England. Pharmacies continue to face recruitment challenges and high staff burnout, alongside rising locum costs and mounting financial and operational pressures. These factors are severely impacting workforce morale and affecting patient access to pharmacy care.

The survey reflects the voices of the owners of over 4,300 pharmacy premises and 1,600 pharmacy team members, highlighting worrying trends in staffing issues, wellbeing, and low morale.

This year's survey highlights:

- **Almost all (95%)** of pharmacy staff report increased pressure linked to staff shortages.
- **70%** of staff report negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing, with **25%** of their wider team barely coping or not coping at all.
- **Over 60%** of pharmacy teams report experiencing staffing shortages, with **21% (about 1 in 5)** saying their pharmacy has had to close temporarily due to this issue.
- **Over half** of pharmacy owners (**57%**) have already stopped recruiting staff or filling vacancies over the past year, with **34%** expecting to do so in 2025.
- **Over half (54%)** of pharmacy owners are struggling to recruit permanent team members, with **37%** reporting difficulties recruiting pharmacists.

Pharmacy staff have also reported that staff shortages are having other impacts on pharmacies and their patients:

- **81%** of staff report increased waiting times for patients.
- **57%** of staff say there has been a reduction in their ability to offer services and advice to patients.
- **Around a third (33%)** of pharmacy staff report that their pharmacy has stopped providing non-essential services, and just under **one in five (18%)** indicate reduced opening hours.

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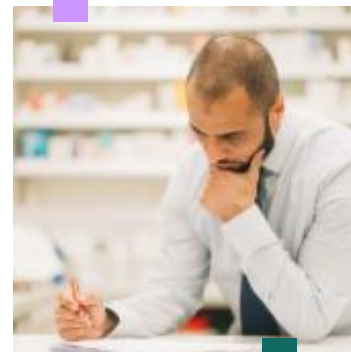
Staff morale is very low, we are overstretched and can't even see an end to the challenges. Another colleague who is so close to me... has finally said she can't cope anymore. She has decided it's no longer worth it and will be moving on soon. This has really affected me, I am not sure how much longer I can hold on!

Pharmacy owner

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I end up going to work every Sunday to do paperwork. I never get to leave my workplace on time. I arrive one hour before opening the pharmacy and leave anywhere up to two to three hours after closing. In reality, I do not have a life. On days I am off work I am constantly worn out.

Pharmacy owner





Our survey lays bare the deepening crisis in community pharmacy staffing and morale. Pharmacy teams are under relentless pressure, affecting both their wellbeing and their ability to provide vital care. Many colleagues are exhausted, feel undervalued, and uncertain about their future in the sector they love.

Funding challenges are pushing many owners to halt recruitment, close their branches or even consider selling their pharmacies. Alongside this, work-life balance for pharmacy teams is under severe strain, adding to low morale across the sector.

This report highlights the human cost behind the data, especially the dedication of professionals keeping services running under immense strain. Their commitment to patients is unwavering, but it cannot be taken for granted. The experiences of pharmacy owners and their staff who have shared their stories with us show the extraordinary personal sacrifices pharmacy professionals are making just to keep their doors open.

We must work collaboratively across the NHS and government to ensure meaningful investment in community pharmacy, better workforce support, and a sustainable funding model. Only by tackling challenges head-on can we create a sustainable future for pharmacies, their teams and the patients they serve.

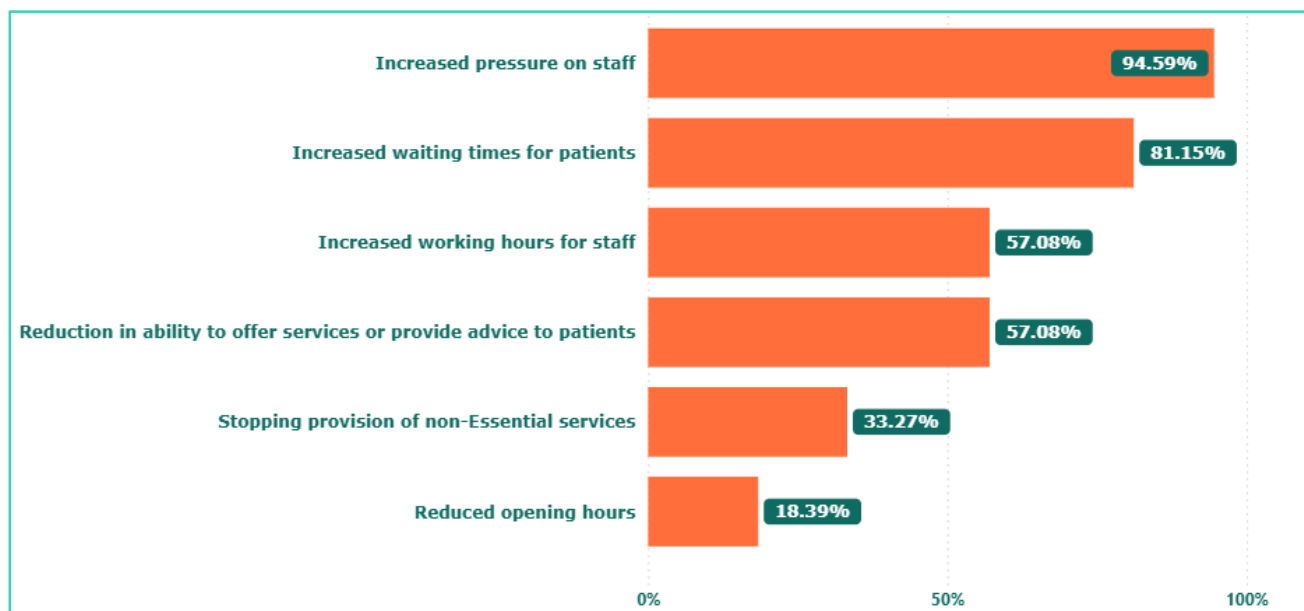
Janet Morrison OBE, Chief Executive of Community Pharmacy England

Findings in Depth

Patients waiting longer for care and limited services

- **81%** of staff report increased waiting times for patients.
- **57%** of staff say there has been a reduction in the ability to offer services and advice to patients.
- Around a third (**33%**) say their pharmacy has stopped providing non-essential services.
- Nearly one in five (**18%**) indicate reduced opening hours.

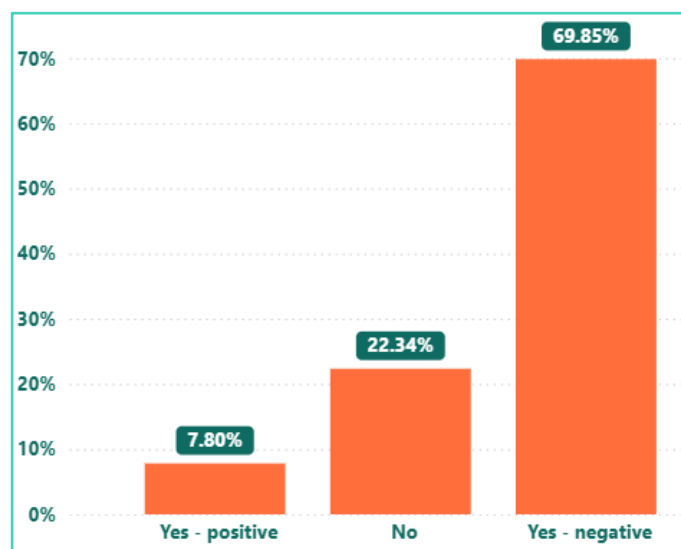
Are staff shortages having any other impacts on the pharmacy and its patients



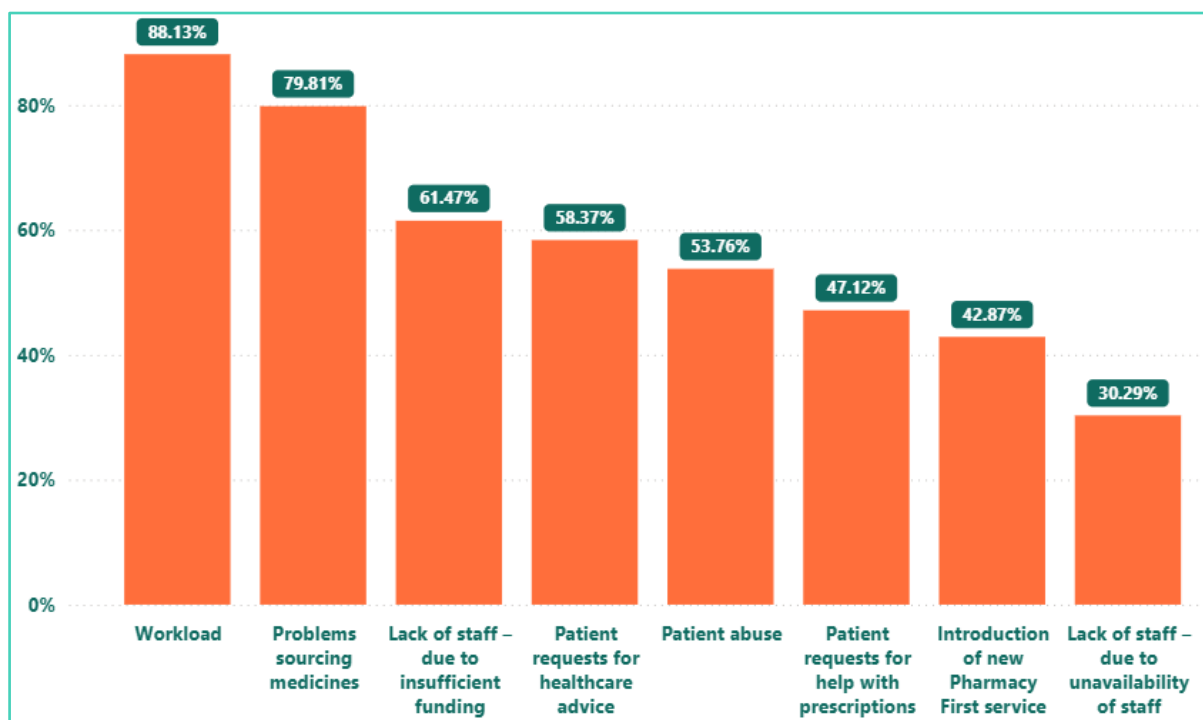
Staff remain under pressure

- **Almost all (95%)** pharmacy staff report increased pressure due to staff shortages.
- **7 in 10 (70%)** staff report negative impacts on their mental health and wellbeing.
- **A quarter of staff (25%)** say they are barely coping or not coping at all.
- **Staff identify multiple reasons for staffing pressures:** 88% cite workload, 80% problems sourcing medicines, 61% insufficient funding, 58% patient requests for healthcare advice and 54% patient abuse.

Is your work having an impact on your mental health and wellbeing?



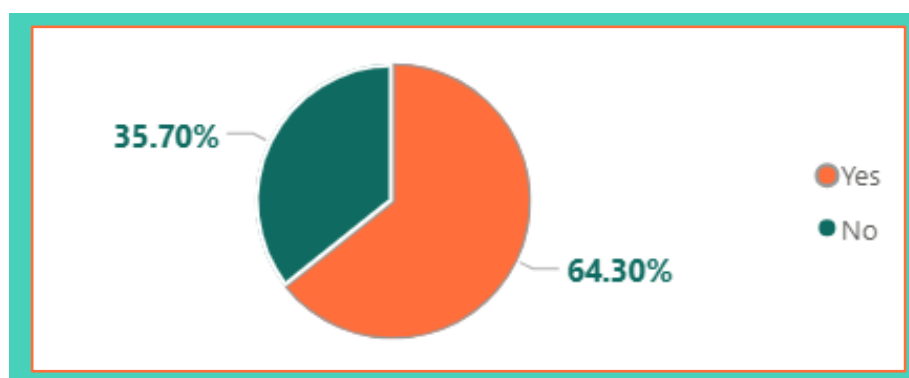
If you and the team are not coping well, what are the main problems?



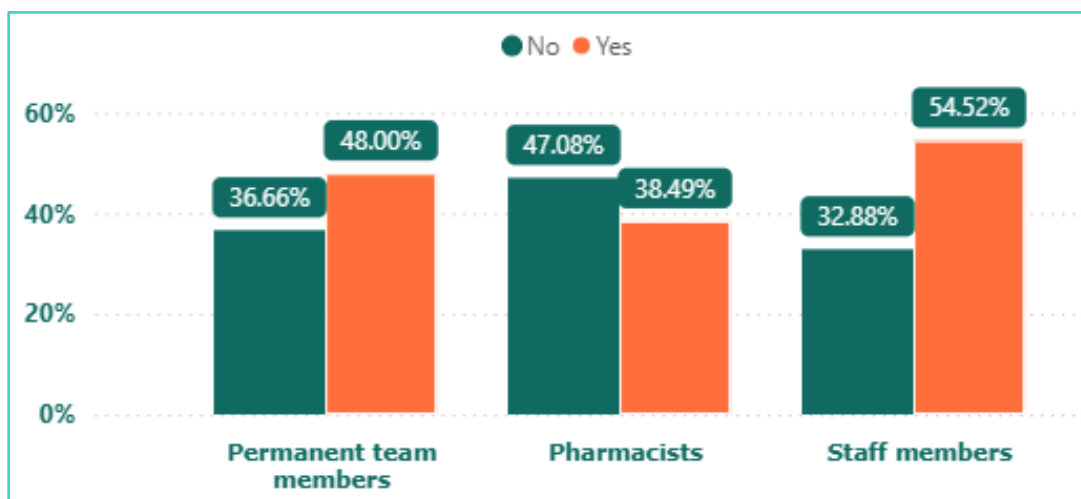
Extent of staff shortages

- Over 60% (64%) of pharmacy teams report staffing shortages.
- 21% pharmacy staff say their pharmacy has had to close temporarily due to shortages.
- 55% of pharmacy owners report shortages of pharmacy staff, 48% of permanent team members, and 39% of pharmacists.
- 42% of pharmacy owners cited challenges in recruiting permanent staff, 32% said shortages have been due to staff sickness, often linked to stress and other pressures of working in pharmacy.

Is the pharmacy currently experiencing staff shortages?



Is your business currently experiencing staff shortages?



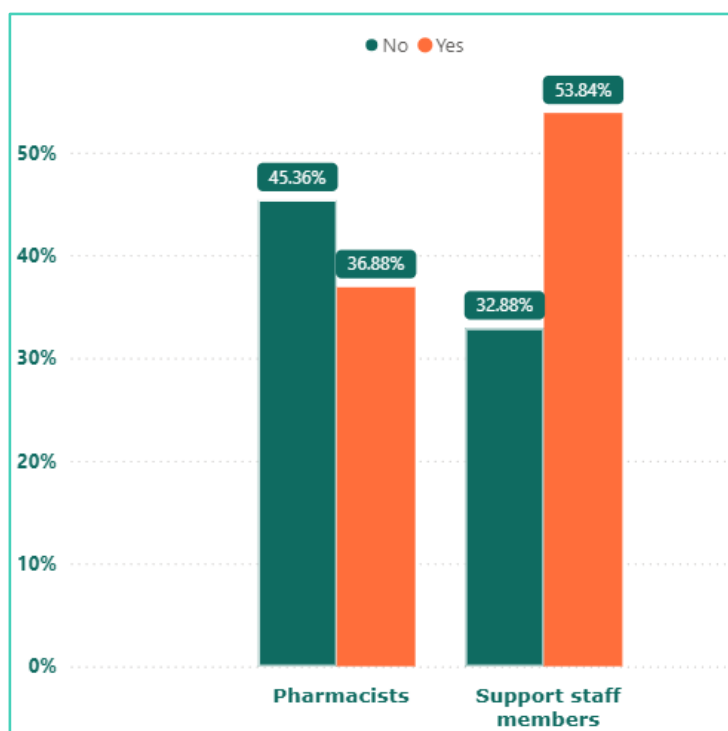
Recruiting staff remains difficult

- **Over half (54%)** of pharmacy owners are struggling to recruit permanent team members.
- **37%** of pharmacy owners report difficulties recruiting pharmacists.
- **57%** of pharmacy owners have already stopped recruiting or filling vacancies in the past year, with **34%** expecting to do so in 2025.

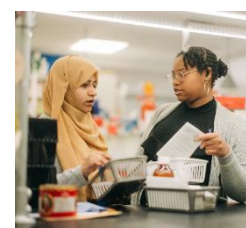
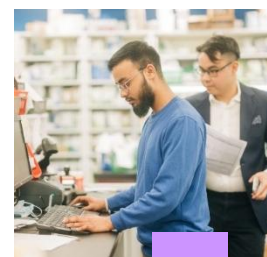
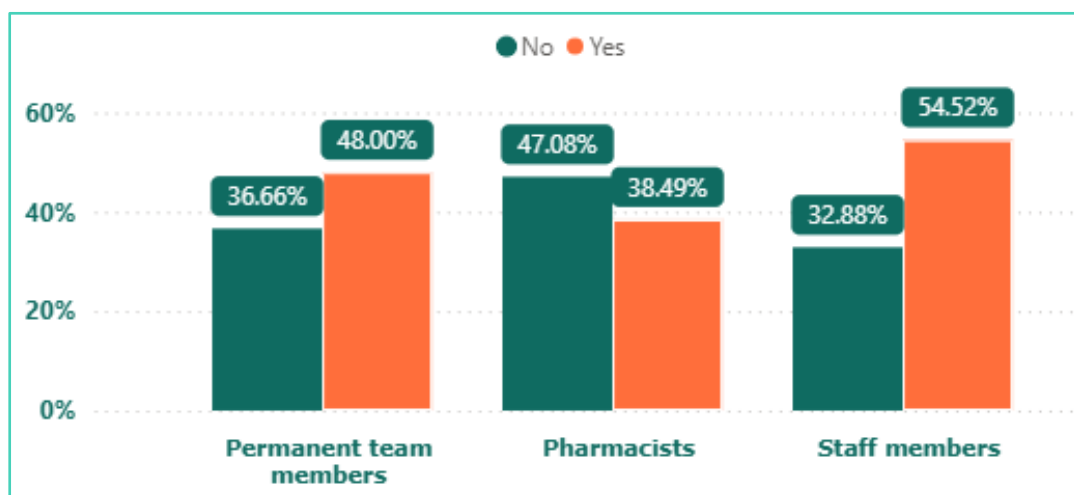
Financial pressures are driving staffing issues

- **Nearly half (48%)** of pharmacy owners struggle with staffing or locum costs the business can't sustain.
- **21% of pharmacy owners** have sadly had to make staff redundant.

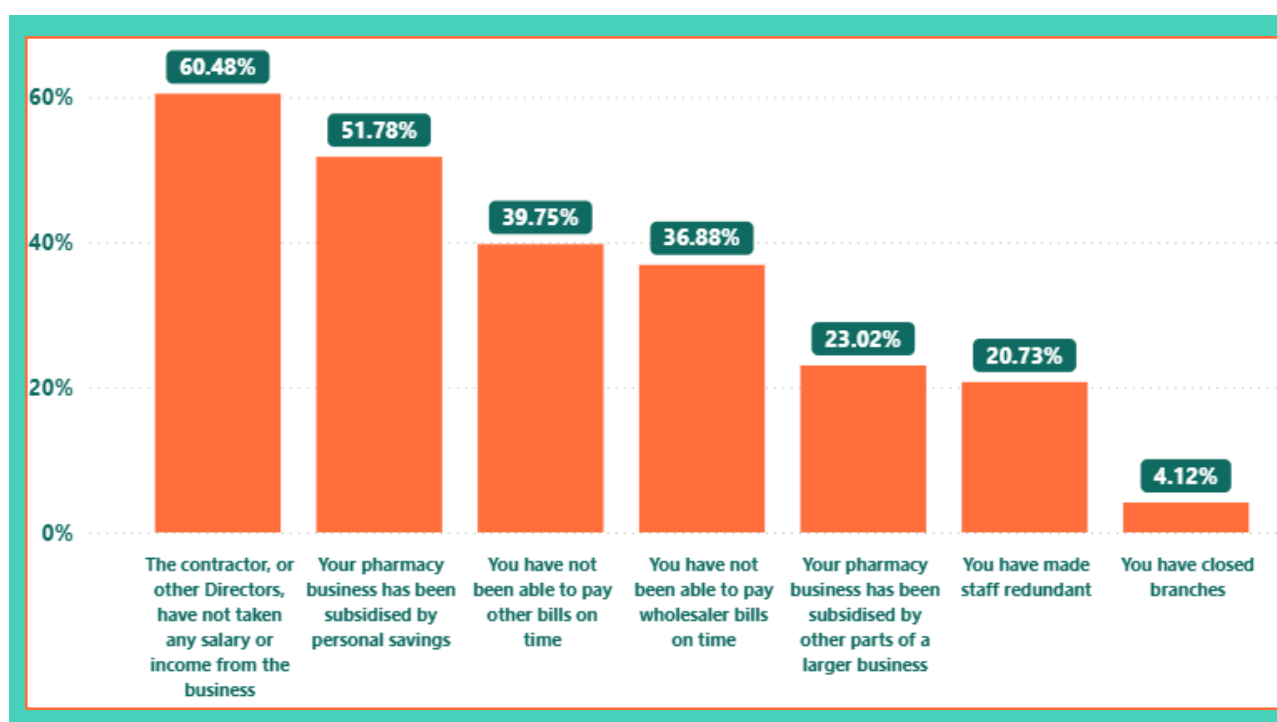
Is your business currently struggling to recruit permanent team members?



Is your business currently experiencing staff shortages?



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





These results show the intense pressures on pharmacy teams and businesses. Workforce shortages, staffing costs that businesses can't sustain, and ongoing funding challenges mean many owners have stopped recruiting or are considering selling up. In some cases, wages take up so much of the budget that finances are under real strain. Added to this, poor work-life balance is damaging morale across the sector. We need a sustainable future where pharmacy teams can meet the NHS's needs and enjoy a better, more balanced working life.

Marc Donovan OBE, Community Pharmacy England Committee Member and Chair of the Community Pharmacy Workforce Development Group

Staffing and morale crisis in Community Pharmacy: Our urgent call for Support

The responses to our survey paint a vivid picture of the pressures facing community pharmacies and the impact on staff, patients, and local communities.

Work-life balance: has been longstanding issue. Pharmacy owners report long working hours, often including weekends and unpaid overtime, negatively affecting their wellbeing, and many have highlighted how it impacts their personal and family lives.

Recognition and morale: We've heard from pharmacists who report feeling valued by patients but underappreciated by the NHS, with much unpaid time spent on patient consultations. This lack of recognition impacts morale for many across the sector. Pharmacy owners have also indicated that chronic pressures in the sector are leading to exhaustion, loss of motivation, and increasing numbers of staff considering leaving the sector.

Locum cost issues: High locum costs and staff turnover remain an ongoing issue, with many pharmacy owners noting the disruption this causes for team continuity and patient trust, with locum rates reaching higher than £40 per hour.

Young pharmacists and recent graduates: Survey responses from pharmacy owners highlighted that many young pharmacists and recent graduates are choosing not to stay in community pharmacy due to workplace pressures, worsening staffing shortages and the appeal of better-paid work outside of the sector.

Financial and operational pressures: The decline in staffing and morale continues, worsened by severe financial and operational challenges. Without continued support, the future of community pharmacies is at increased risk, potentially affecting the quality of care provided to patients across the country.



Permanent closures

These closures carry a profound emotional impact on owners and staff. The crisis cannot be underestimated, with a fifth (21%) of pharmacy owners reporting they do not expect their business to survive another year. Permanent closures also put patients at risk by reducing access to essential local pharmacy services.

Community Pharmacy England is calling on the Government and the NHS to deliver a sustainable funding and operational model for community pharmacy.

Pharmacy owner case studies



My day usually begins around 4am. I spend the first couple of hours catching up on emails and messages from colleagues before waking my daughters for school. After helping them get ready, I turn to urgent staffing issues – including repeated visa applications for a pharmacy manager, which often go unanswered despite daily attempts. By 8.30am, I'm in the pharmacy where I typically work until late evening, often without a proper break.

Too many pharmacy owners like me are working long hours each day just to keep the business afloat. My wife works the same long hours alongside me, but the reality is that the funding does not allow us to employ the kind of support every business needs – an area manager, a marketing manager, a finance manager or a HR manager. Instead, we shoulder all of it ourselves, simply because the current funding model leaves no alternative.

Alongside these pressures, I continue to care for patients who rely on me daily. I often see regular patients who are distressed when I have to explain their medicine hasn't arrived because of supply issues. Parents also bring in their children with minor illnesses such as sore throats or earaches, and under Pharmacy First – despite all the challenges we face as a team – we make sure they are attended to. These are the realities of community pharmacy.

I also regularly hear from colleagues on WhatsApp and Telegram who are facing the same struggles, many reaching out for advice or simply support to get through another day. The situation is challenging and, in the long run, it has a deep impact on the future of community pharmacy.

Anil Sharma, Community pharmacy owner in the East of England



At the start of this year, in January 2025, I spoke publicly about our NHS pharmacy contract, warning that unless things changed, we would be forced out of business. That warning came true because, sadly, in October 2025, we closed our Eazihealth Pharmacy, Faversham Branch permanently.

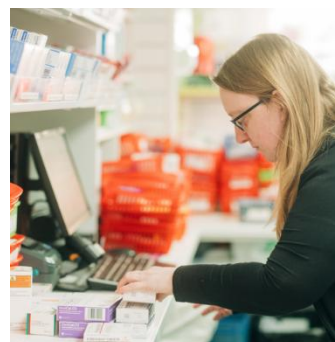
The painful decision to close my pharmacy became unavoidable as my pharmacy succumbed to the sustained financial pressures on community pharmacies and the impossible environment created by years of underfunding, leaving me no option but to close our doors.

This was particularly difficult as our pharmacy had recently been nominated for a Best Pharmacy Award in Kent, a recognition we could not pursue because the closure decision had already been made. The message is clear: closures are not about quality of service, but about an unsustainable funding system.

Pharmacies delivering essential services, including Pharmacy First, flu jabs, COVID vaccinations, are left with insufficient support, while other industries and supply chains receive significant funding. Pharmacy closures affect not only owners but also employed and locum pharmacists, whose livelihoods are disappearing, and the patients who lose their care.

The toll on my mental health was enormous as I struggled to come to terms with closing my pharmacy. But I feel it is important to give my voice to this issue, for what so many of us endure in silence. If my experience can help strengthen the case for real reform and sustainable funding, then at least some good can come from what has happened. Knowing that organisations like Community Pharmacy England continue to advocate tirelessly brings comfort, not just to me, but to many pharmacists still holding on.

Temitope Awofeso, Community pharmacy owner based in Kent, England



Voices from the frontline

"I usually get just three hours of sleep before starting another 15-hour shift. It's only because myself and my family members, who also run the pharmacy with me, work these extreme hours that our pharmacy is still open. We know colleagues who have suffered strokes and heart attacks from this workload. How long can this go on?"

- Pharmacy owner

"Staff morale is very low, we are overstretched and can't even see an end to the challenges. Another colleague has decided she can't cope anymore. She has decided it's no longer worth it and will be moving on soon. This has really affected me, I am not sure how much longer I can hold on!" **- Pharmacy owner**

"I end up going to work every Sunday to do paperwork. I never get to leave my workplace on time... I do not have a life."

- Pharmacy owner



"It is becoming mentally and physically exhausting. Unable to enjoy home life because I'm constantly worrying about work pressures" **- Pharmacy team member**

"Locum rates are high and continuous locums affect the team... there is no continuity to drive the business forward." **- Pharmacy owner**

"Staff are constantly turning over – new faces for patients is worrying and erodes confidence in our ability to provide great service." **- Pharmacy owner**

"Owning a pharmacy has created personal health issues – I'm selling after 30 years."

- Pharmacy owner

"The abuse from patients' expectations is severely demoralising our staff." **- Pharmacy owner**



Challenges persist three years on: A comparison of 2025 and 2022 survey data

When the Pressures Survey was launched in 2022, the intention was to capture the ongoing challenges faced by pharmacies across the UK. Now, in 2025, the latest findings highlight that key pressures on community pharmacy teams remain high, with workload, patient waiting times, medicine supply issues, patient abuse, and staff shortages continuing to affect day-to-day operations. While there have been slight improvements in staff shortages, other pressures have worsened or remain significant, underscoring the ongoing challenges facing the sector.

Comparison of Key Findings – 2022 vs 2025

Key challenges	2022	2025
Workload	78% of staff reported increased working hours / workload	88% of staff cite workload as a top pressure
Patient waiting times	82% of staff reported pharmacy shortages increased pressure	81% of staff report longer patient waiting times
Medicine supply issues	75% of staff reported supply issues causing patient aggression	80% of staff report problems sourcing medicines, contributing to workload
Patient abuse / aggression	75% of staff reported aggression	54% of staff report abuse
Staff shortages – teams	82% of staff reported shortages	Over 60% of staff report shortages

"These latest figures are deeply concerning, but sadly not surprising. When 70% of pharmacy staff report that their mental health and wellbeing have been negatively affected, and one in four say they are barely coping, it underlines just how urgently the sector needs to act. With 32% of staff shortages linked to sickness which is often driven by stress and pressure, we're seeing the real human cost of a profession under strain.

At Pharmacist Support, we hear every day from pharmacists who are struggling to manage the pressures of their roles. Without meaningful investment and a joined-up approach to wellbeing across the profession, we risk losing dedicated people to burnout and exhaustion. To create a sustainable future for pharmacy, wellbeing must be recognised and supported at every level, including being built into policy, funding, and workforce planning. The people behind the counter are essential to patient care, and it's time their wellbeing was treated as equally essential."

Danielle Hunt, CEO of Pharmacist Support

Recommendations

Community Pharmacy England is calling for:

1. Increased community pharmacy funding to support recruitment and retention of pharmacy staff:

Long-standing funding issues have left pharmacy owners without sufficient resources to run their businesses as they would wish. This shortage of funding has an adverse impact on staffing levels, which in turn has led to the downward spiral illustrated in this report. At the same time as funding has been constrained, the number and volume of NHS services that pharmacies are expected to deliver has also increased, putting further strain on workload and staff members.

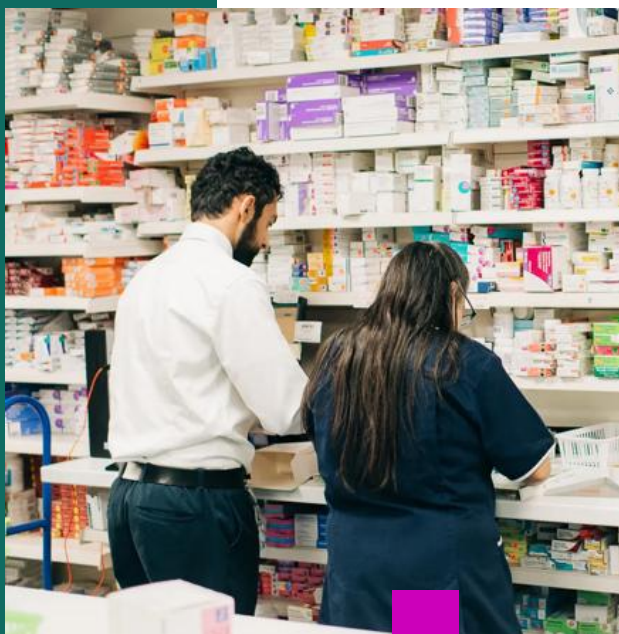
The main part of the solution lies in increased funding, enabling pharmacy owners to recruit more staff and compete with other local employers. This would help reduce stress on pharmacy teams and improve retention of the pharmacy workforce.

2. Better support for community pharmacy staff:

Pharmacy owners should be able to provide staff with protected learning time, through the NHS allowing pharmacies to close their doors to undertake training, as other primary care providers are able to do.

3. Making the best use of clinical skills:

Pharmacists should be supported to work to the top of their licence, including through funding for training to become independent prescribers and to undertake other clinical roles. This would improve patient care, support staff and strength.



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