

Community Pharmacy: The Heart of Neighbourhood Health

Neighbourhood Health is a core theme throughout the NHS **10 Year Health Plan** and is central to achieving the Government's commitments to shift care **from hospital to community** and **from sickness to prevention**. Neighbourhood Health services will be structured around community care, prioritising prevention, early intervention and continuity of care to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities. Neighbourhood Health Centres will serve populations of 30 – 50,000 people and be serviced by an integrated team of NHS, local authority, voluntary and community partners.

“Community pharmacies are trusted and valuable community assets, offering a highly accessible front door for patients, and acting as a safety net for the NHS when access to other services is strained. With the right levers in place, pharmacies could do much more to support Neighbourhood Health, offering a wide range of prevention, minor illness and medicines related services.”

Janet Morrison, Community Pharmacy England Chief Executive

The Value of Community Pharmacies

Community pharmacies make a significant contribution to neighbourhood-level care, **providing millions of clinical consultations and dispensing more than a billion prescription medicines annually**, alongside offering both **public health services and healthcare advice**. This reduces pressures on GP practices, urgent care and A&E and yet the full potential of pharmacy's contribution to primary care remains untapped.

Goal: Improving health and care outcomes

Expanding current pharmacy services could enable pharmacies to:

- Further support **cardiovascular risk identification and management**;
- Provide additional **contraception support** and wider **public health interventions**;
- Offer **ongoing management and support for people living with conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, COPD and mental health needs**; and
- Provide services which **improve medicines adherence, safety and outcomes**, and **reduce the prescribing burden on general practice**.



Goal: Improving access to General Practice

Pharmacies support people with common conditions and minor illness, for example through the Pharmacy First Service, offering fast and convenient access to care. Expanding Pharmacy First, to make the best use of **pharmacists' emerging prescribing skills**, is a key next step to further embed pharmacies as the NHS first port of call and reduce demand for GP appointments.

Goal: Improving urgent and emergency care performance

Pharmacies could build on their existing prevention offer – which includes vaccinations, smoking cessation advice, and more – to provide an enhanced preventative health programme.

Goal: Improving patient and staff satisfaction

Patients value both the quality and convenience of pharmacy services. Building on the existing national framework to empower pharmacies to offer enhanced services such as to support women's health or help people long-term conditions to optimise their medicines and health, would help to bring care closer to home.

Challenges

Despite strong policy recognition that community pharmacies will be critical to the success of Neighbourhood Health, some worrying questions and issues remain outstanding:

- **Patchy involvement of pharmacy:** a lack of clarity on pharmacy's role in neighbourhood governance structures means that, while in some areas engagement at governance level is good, in others there is no route for pharmacy to have any meaningful influence.
- **Lack of funding:** repeated NHS reports have recognised the need to divert funding from secondary care (hospitals) into primary care, but it is still not clear what mechanisms or incentives exist to make this happen at Neighbourhood level.
- **System pressures and capacity:** ICB restructures are slowing progress, and the time needed for healthcare professionals to engage in integrated teams is a limiting factor.
- **Impact assessments:** it is not clear how the impact of new Neighbourhood Health Centres will be properly assessed to avoid damage to existing healthcare providers.

“Neighbourhood Health will only succeed if community pharmacies are fully integrated and supported as core partners. Community pharmacy is ready to engage and make this happen: playing its full part in delivering neighbourhood health, and, with the right policy support and investment, helping to make the shifts from hospital to community and from sickness to prevention.”

Janet Morrison, Community Pharmacy England Chief Executive