

Press Release: Embargoed until 00:01 on Tuesday 14th July 2026

75% of pharmacies losing money as medicine shortages hit patients daily

Community pharmacies across England are facing severe financial losses, with patients increasingly feeling the impact through delays to medicines and reduced access to care.

New survey findings from Community Pharmacy England show that daily medicines shortages and rising operating pressures are affecting both pharmacy teams and the people who rely on them.

Community pharmacies remain a vital front door to the NHS, providing accessible healthcare advice, medicines and clinical services without appointment. But the sector's ability to deliver this care is increasingly under strain.

Community Pharmacy England's survey of the owners of more than 2,900 pharmacies and 900 team members reveals the growing strain on both pharmacies and patients:

Key findings include:

- **Just 14% of pharmacies are currently profitable.**
- **76% of pharmacies report that patients are being impacted by the pressures facing the pharmacy business.**
- **72% of pharmacy team members say their patients are affected daily by medicines shortages.**

Patients face longer waits and reduced access

Community pharmacies have been struggling financially since funding cuts were imposed in 2015 and despite welcome recent investment, independent economic analysis shows a £2 billion funding gap across England, placing pharmacies under significant financial strain, with direct consequences for patients.

- **In nearly three quarters (73%)** of pharmacies, patients are waiting longer to receive advice from pharmacy teams.
- **83% of pharmacies** are unable to respond to patients' phone calls and emails as promptly as usual due to the pressures they are facing.

- **Staff in nearly two in five pharmacies (39%)** are unable to spend as much time supporting and advising patients as they would like.

Worsening shortages increase strain on pharmacies

Pharmacies are continuing to be hit by medicines supply issues, with record numbers of price concessions* granted month after month this year.

- **88% of pharmacy team members say that patients are having to make repeat visits to multiple pharmacies to seek advice or obtain medicines.**
- **86%** of pharmacies are spending longer procuring medicines than they did last year.
- **Pharmacy owners reported that in 30%** of pharmacies, medicines procurement is taking longer than ever before.

Price concessions are temporary adjustments to the reimbursement price of medicines for a particular month when community pharmacies cannot source them at or below the Drug Tariff price. They are granted by the Department of Health and Social Care at the request of Community Pharmacy England, based on reports from pharmacy teams. (See notes to editors for further detail)*

Financial distress has become increasingly severe

- Almost **all pharmacies (99.7%)** report higher costs than last year.
- **99%** say NHS reimbursement does not cover medicine costs.
- **95%** cite rising staffing costs as a key pressure.

Pharmacy owners shared serious worries and concerns about future cost increases, including changes to National Minimum Wage and business rates. **In one third (33%)** of pharmacies, business owners are already looking at ways to further reduce costs which they believe will likely impact patients.

A quarter of pharmacy owners or directors (25%) have not taken any salary or income from the business in the past year and **15% have resorted to subsidising their pharmacy with personal savings just to keep it going.**

To manage costs:

- **Nearly one in five pharmacies (18%)** are making staff redundant.
- **30%** of pharmacies had already reduced opening hours during 2025.

- **21%** of pharmacies are expected to have to reduce opening hours in 2026.
- **29%** of pharmacies may need to start charging patients for unfunded services that were previously offered free of charge.

There is a strong consensus from the survey data that the current system is unfit for purpose and requires urgent, large-scale reform. Community Pharmacy England is continuing to campaign for sustainable investment and a long-term plan to protect pharmacies, patients, and NHS access.

Janet Morrison, Chief Executive of Community Pharmacy England, said:

“These stark results show us once again that pharmacies are not sustainable, and that the pressures on them are directly affecting patient access to medicines and care. It is very troubling that pharmacies are having to reduce opening hours and introduce new charges for things that have previously been free to patients – and this goes directly against Government’s ambitions to shift more healthcare, closer to home. And it is deeply concerning to see the depth of the financial crisis in the sector.

Without further investment, pharmacy closures will continue and this will have very worrying consequences for patients and the public, impacting their access to medicines and advice directly. We know that closures often happen in areas where healthcare support is needed most, so this will worsen health inequalities. Further closures will also be devastating for wider local healthcare networks who will struggle to pick up the slack – pressure on GPs and hospitals will increase. And our local high streets, as well as local employment, will suffer.

For all their sakes, and for the future of the NHS, community pharmacies need a sustainable future: meaning investment alongside a clear long-term plan for the sector.”

Dervis Gurol, Community pharmacy owner and superintendent pharmacist based in the South East of England, said:

“The pressure of being a pharmacy owner now is enormous: on the financial side, many colleagues have had to rely on additional financing and personal savings simply to cover day-to-day costs and bills, and that cannot go on much longer. This sort of worry has huge mental health implications and I know many pharmacy owners are seeing their health worsen as a consequence of long-term stress.

As well as the impact on patients and local communities, all pharmacy owners worry about what closure of the business would mean for their staff, for the wider health network and of course for local high streets, some of which could not survive another vacant building. We urgently need a pathway to a sustainable future.”

Fin McCaul, Community pharmacy owner based in Greater Manchester, said:

“People rely on us every day for advice, treatment and support. My team works incredibly hard to provide this and to support patients in our community, but we are increasingly being diverted away from patient care because we are spending so much time trying to source medicines that should be readily available.

We regularly spend many extra hours every week dealing with medicines supply issues. It’s frustrating work for staff, and it can be unpleasant where patients are understandably upset and anxious about delays receiving medicines they need and take it out on the team. To make it even worse, some of the medicines we spend so much time sourcing are then so highly priced that we end up dispensing it at a loss to the business, which is totally unsustainable.

I strongly feel that our current funding does not reflect the real-world pressures we face, including inflation, staffing costs, rent, utilities and medicines costs. This needs to be fixed. Pharmacies need to be supported for the full contribution we make to patients, local communities and the NHS.”

What pharmacy team staff also told us:

- *“Patients with mental health problems being impacted as quetiapine [prescription psychiatric medication] prices gone up significantly unavailability day to day, they went into crisis as couldn’t get hold of the medication.”*
- *“Supply issues are meaning some patients are going without medication for days at a time.”*
- *“In my 21 years as a pharmacist I have never seen so many stock issues and [medications listed] over drug tariff prices. Trying to maintain all my essential services can be difficult. Getting a good team and delegating is a must. We have really tried to communicate with our local surgery and need to work together.”*
- *“Issues with medicine availability is challenging, constantly asking patients to come back on another day, sometimes up to 3 or 4 times. Patients get frustrated quite rightly, we either end up losing the patient to another pharmacy or they are verbally abusive.”*

~ ENDS ~

Notes to Editors

For further information, media queries or interview requests please contact comms.team@cpe.org.uk

Background Information on the Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2026

Community Pharmacy England represents all c.10,400 community pharmacies in England. This press release is based on the results of Community Pharmacy England's 2026 Pharmacy Pressures Survey, which was carried out between mid-February and mid-April 2026. The survey consisted of two parts, an online questionnaire specifically for pharmacy owners (or head office representatives) and another separate questionnaire for pharmacy team members. Pharmacy owners representing 2,936 pharmacies and over 900 pharmacy team members (mostly pharmacists, but also some technicians, dispensers and assistants) took part in their respective surveys. Therefore, providing a comprehensive snapshot of current financial, operational and workforce challenges across the sector. The survey results highlight the scale of the pressures facing community pharmacy and the impact on patients and services.

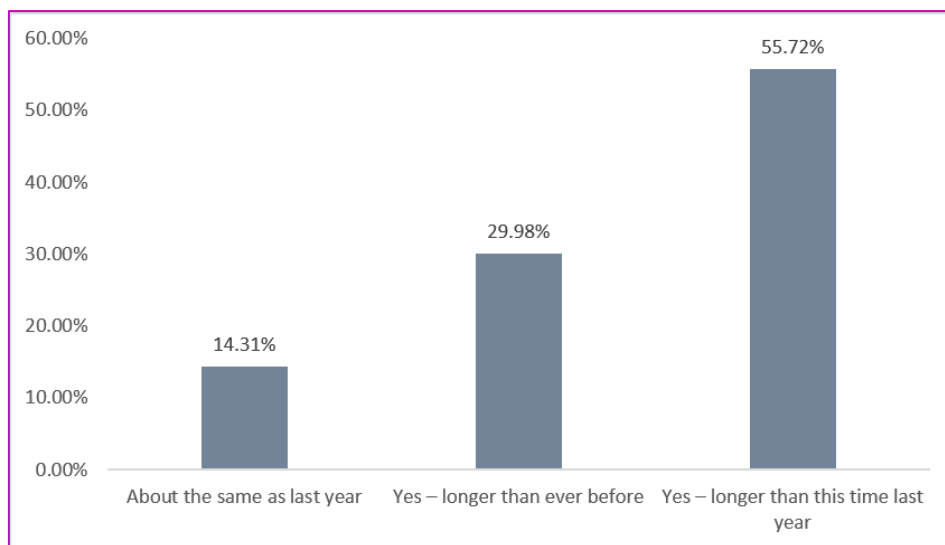
Survey data

The figures mentioned above are taken from Community Pharmacy England ***Pharmacy Pressure Survey 2026***. Key graphs are available below, but a full survey results summary and additional data are available on request. For further information, please contact: comms.team@cpe.org.uk.

Three in four community pharmacies are losing money

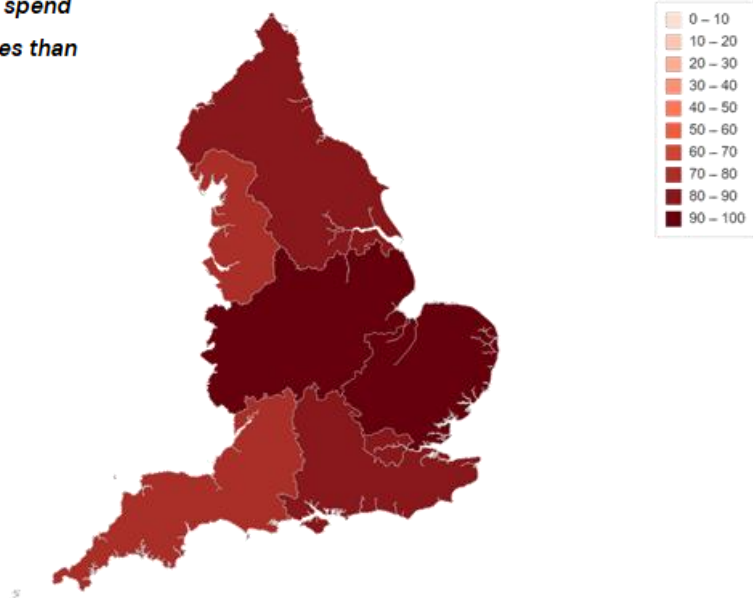


Is your business having to spend longer to procure medicines than this time (February) last year?



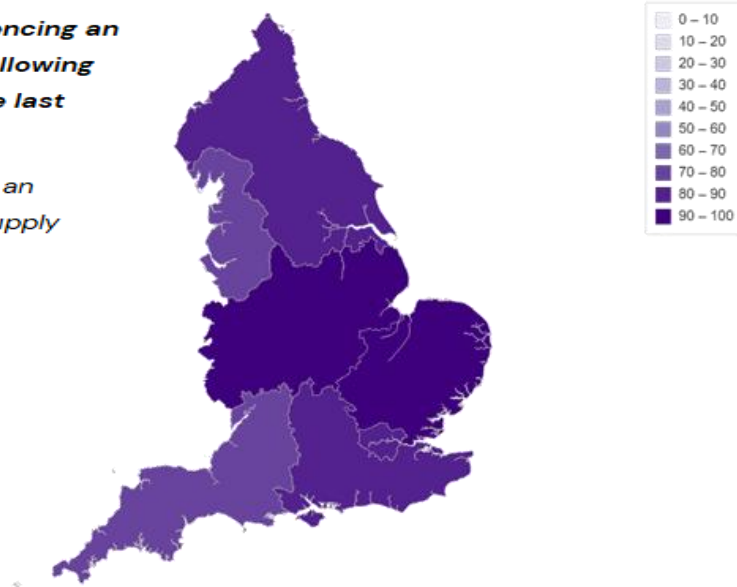
Is your business having to spend longer to procure medicines than this time last year?

% saying yes

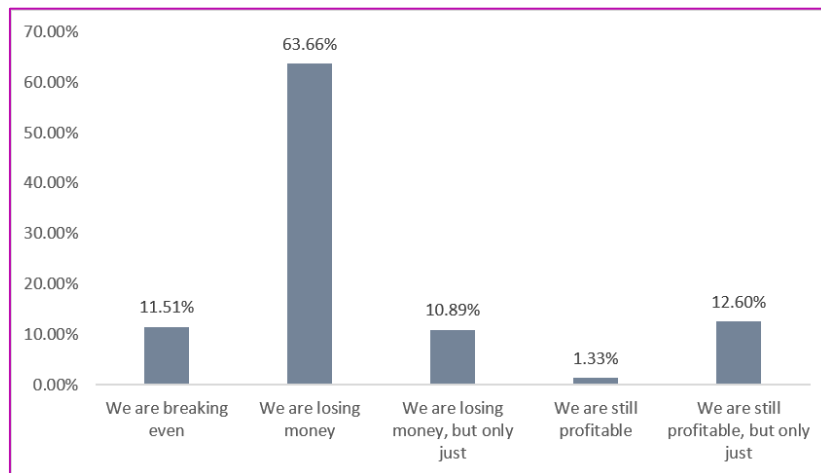


Is your business experiencing an increase in any of the following compared with this time last year?

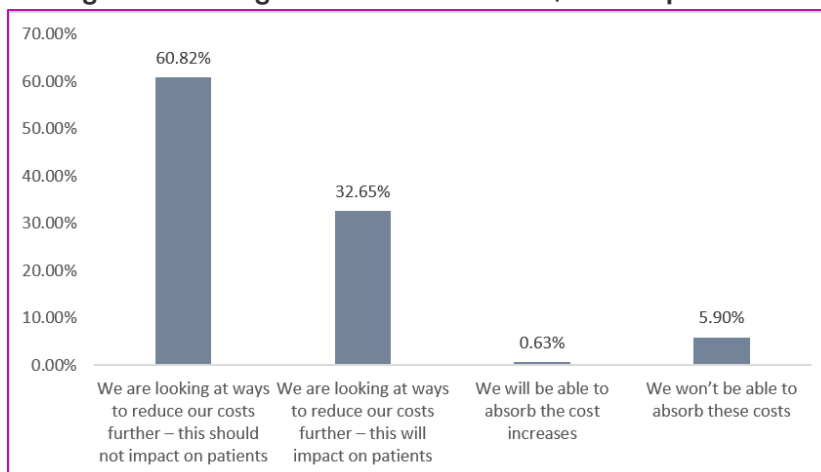
% saying there has been an increase in medicines supply chain/wholesaler issues



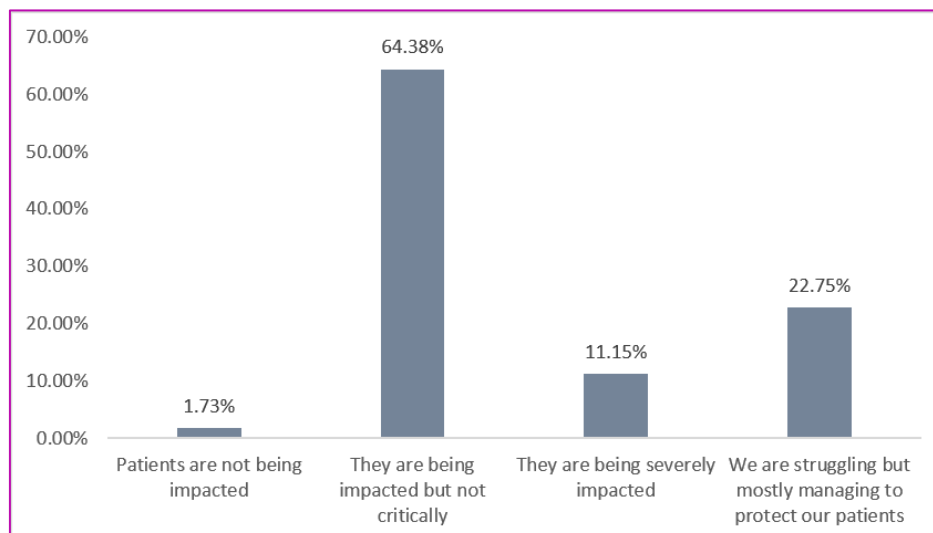
How profitable is your pharmacy business at present?



How will your business manage the upcoming increase in National Minimum Wage and changes to business rates, from April 2026?



Are patient services being negatively affected by the pressures on your business?



Sample-based findings

These findings are based on responses from a sample of pharmacy owners in England and are indicative of trends within the sector. They provide a snapshot of current concerns and should be seen as estimates rather than precise figures for all pharmacies.

Further Information

- For any further information visit our [Pressures Survey webpage](#)
- Price concessions**
When community pharmacies cannot source a product at or below the published reimbursement price as set out in the Drug Tariff, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) can introduce a price concession. This is a temporary adjustment to the reimbursement price of a medicine and is introduced at the request of Community Pharmacy England based on reports received from pharmacy teams. A price concession can be requested for any medicine listed in the Drug Tariff. For any medicine granted a price concession, pharmacies are automatically reimbursed at the new prices for that month.
- Further information on medicine supply issues, including on price concession trends can be found here: [Supply chain and shortages](#)
- For general background information on community pharmacy see: [Learn more about community pharmacy – Community Pharmacy England](#)

About Community Pharmacy England

We represent community pharmacy businesses of all sizes in England and are responsible for negotiating the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) under which all community pharmacies operate. We work closely with everyone in the community pharmacy sector, including the Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs), to meet our goals and to promote the value of community pharmacy.