

Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2026

Introduction

Community Pharmacy England has published the findings of its Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2026. The survey shows a sector under immense strain, with further pharmacy closures a likelihood unless urgent action is taken to invest in and support pharmacies.

The Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2026 reflects responses from 2,936 pharmacy owners and over 900 team members across England (Feb to Apr 2026), providing a robust snapshot of current pressures and their impact on patients and the public.



The Pressures Survey shows 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. It is deeply concerning to see the depth of the financial crisis in the sector.”

Janet Morrison OBE, Chief Executive of Community Pharmacy England

Key Findings

- **Community pharmacies are a vital NHS front door under severe strain:**
 - Pharmacies provide walk-in care, medicines and advice without an appointment, but they are under huge pressures. **75% are losing money and only 14% are profitable.**
- **Pressures on pharmacies are being driven by a wide range of factors including:**
 - **Rising workload** – as prescription volumes and demand for healthcare advice continue to rise. Medicines supply issues also add to workload pressures.

- **A financial squeeze** – there is a £2 billion funding gap between the economic costs of the services that pharmacies provide and what they are paid to do so.
- **Rising costs and inflation** – staff, utilities, business rates and all other costs are rising for pharmacies.
- **Services for patients are being scaled back:**
 - **30% of pharmacies have reduced their opening hours**, while some pharmacies have had to stop providing services such as vaccinations and Pharmacy First.
- **Patient access is already worsening:**
 - **76% report impacts on patient care**, including longer waits, delays in accessing medicines, and reduced responsiveness.
- **Medicines supply and pricing remain problems:**
 - Almost all (**99%**) pharmacies say NHS payments do not cover their medicine costs.
 - Additionally, medicine shortages are widespread, with **86%** spending longer sourcing medicines and **88%** say patients are visiting multiple pharmacies to get medicines.
- **Workforce pressures are also limiting patient care:**
 - Rising staffing costs affect **95%** of pharmacies. Many owners are going without a salary, and nearly **40%** of staff cannot spend enough time with patients.
- **Urgent action is needed to support NHS priorities:**
 - Without sustainable funding, pharmacies cannot deliver the Government's ambition to shift care into the community and relieve pressure on GPs and hospitals.

Implications

Community pharmacy is under sustained and increasing pressure across finances, workforce and medicines supply and this is impacting its ability to support patients and the wider NHS.

Community pharmacy is central to current NHS and Government priorities, particularly the shift towards prevention, neighbourhood health services, and care closer to home. Pharmacies are often the first and most accessible point of care, with no appointment needed. They play a key role in reducing pressure on GPs, urgent care and hospitals and they support prevention, early intervention and long-term condition management

With the right support, pharmacies can do more to improve access to care in local communities, delivering services such as Pharmacy First and vaccinations at scale and helping tackle health



inequalities. But without action more pharmacies will reduce services or close, patient access will worsen, and pressure on the rest of the NHS will increase.

What needs to change?

Action is needed now to stabilise the sector and create the conditions for growth. Pharmacies need:

- **Sustainable core funding:** Funding must reflect the real cost of delivering NHS services and address the current funding gap.
- **Full reimbursement for medicines** Pharmacies should not be subsidising NHS care. Reimbursement must cover actual purchasing costs.
- **Long-term certainty** A long-term sustainable solution is needed so pharmacies can plan, invest in staff, and expand services.
- **Workforce investment:** Support for recruitment, retention and training is essential to maintain safe, effective care.
- **Support with business costs:** Targeted relief on business rates and property costs will help protect access, particularly in high-cost areas.
- **Stronger role in community-based care:** Pharmacies must be fully integrated into NHS primary care and neighbourhood health models.
- **Action on medicines supply:** National action is needed to improve supply chain resilience and reduce shortages.



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.

Janet Morrison OBE, Chief Executive of Community Pharmacy England



How can MPs help

- Visit your local pharmacy and get a first-hand experience of what the pressures feel like on the ground. We can support with coordinating this visit if it is helpful. We can of course support with drafting content for your communications channels also.
- Write to the Secretary of State to express your concerns and ask that the Government urgently addresses community pharmacy pressures and challenges.
- If you have any questions about the survey data and would like a follow-up call, please let us know. As above, we can assist with developing awareness content for your channels and setting up a visit to a local pharmacy.

If you have any queries or require more information, please contact: comms.team@cpe.org.uk