May 2025

Briefing: What pharmacy owners told us in April 2025

As part of Community Pharmacy England's commitment to working more closely with pharmacy owners – listening to them better, as well as engaging more regularly via events and other channels – we sought input from the sector ahead of the May 2025 Committee Meeting.

An online survey of pharmacy owners and head office officials ran between 16th and 30th April 2025, with pharmacy owners asked to reflect on the current financial outlook and the recent Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) settlement's impact on their businesses to help inform Committee discussions on how the settlement is being felt across the sector and how serious the ongoing challenges still are for pharmacies.

Thanks to all those who took the time to complete the survey. This briefing summarises what you told us.

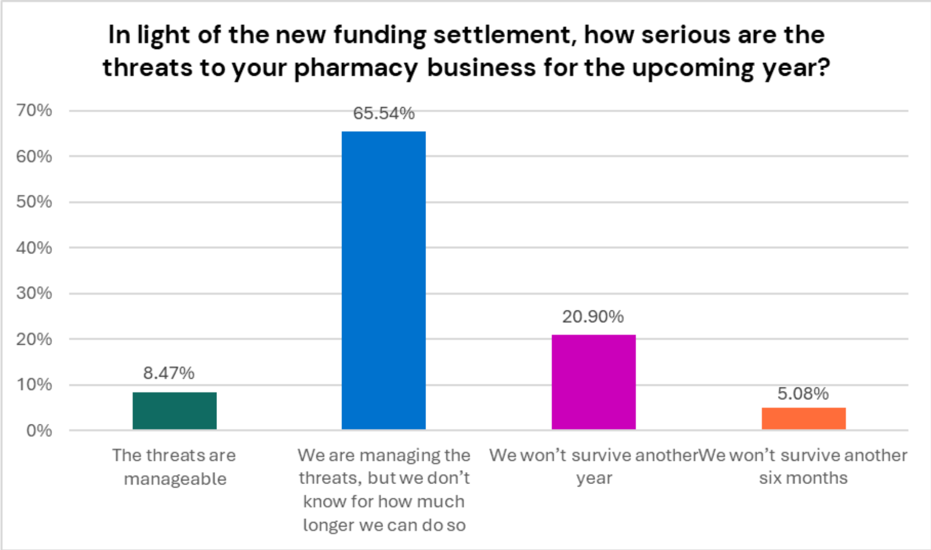
Opinion Poll Results

Participants representing 3,517 pharmacy premises (c34% of all community pharmacies) in England engaged with the April Opinion Poll, giving a snapshot of thoughts from a range of different pharmacy businesses across the country.

Pressures, Threats and Outlook

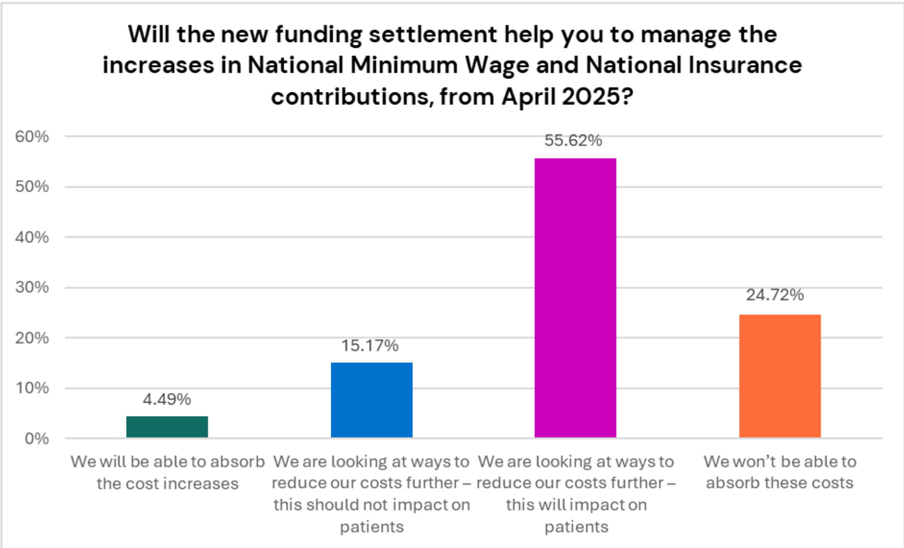
There appears to be little change from polling conducted before the CPCF settlement was announced, i.e. concerns about the future remain and confidence to invest is still low.

- 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.



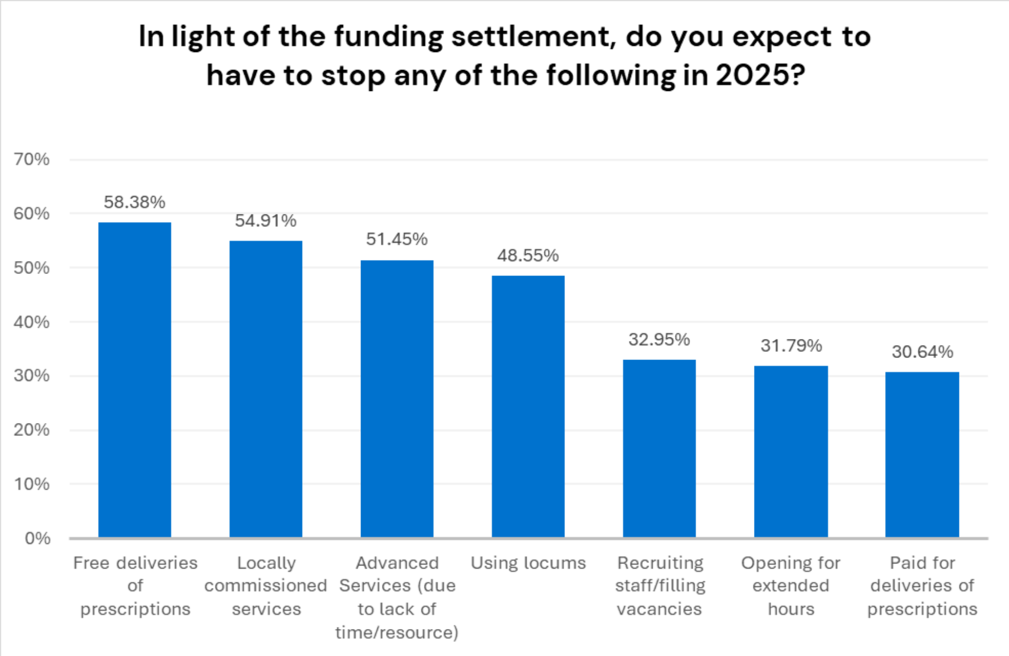
Pharmacy owners don't want to impact their patients, but it appears inevitable. When asked how they expect to manage the increase in National Minimum Wage and National Insurance contributions:

- Over half (56%) are considering cost reductions 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.

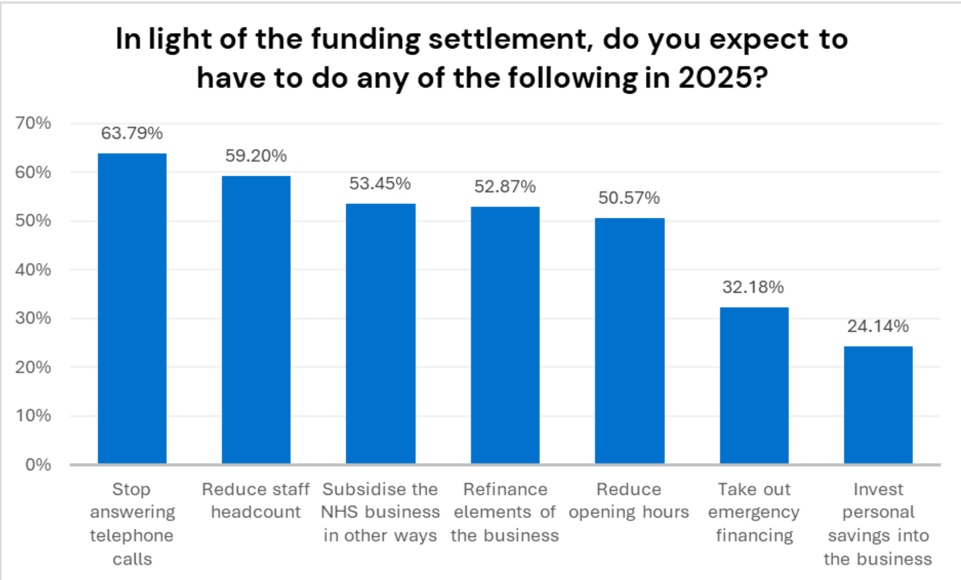


Pharmacy owners are still looking at ways to reduce costs and this may impact further on patients. In response to the new funding settlement, pharmacy owners are considering or already taking actions to protect their businesses:

- 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 subsiding the NHS side of their business this year.



Pharmacy owners need further investment. When asked what would help alleviate the pressures on their pharmacies, the highest ranked change was increased funding. Second and third was higher remuneration rates for dispensing medicines and higher fees for provision of clinical services.

Feedback to the Government

Pharmacy owners were also asked what message they would like to share with the Government by way of feedback on the new funding settlement.

Comments indicated ongoing widespread financial concern, noting the historical gap and findings of the independent economic analysis. Whilst some feel the settlement is a good start, many want more action and are frustrated that the Government does not understand the pressures that pharmacies are under.

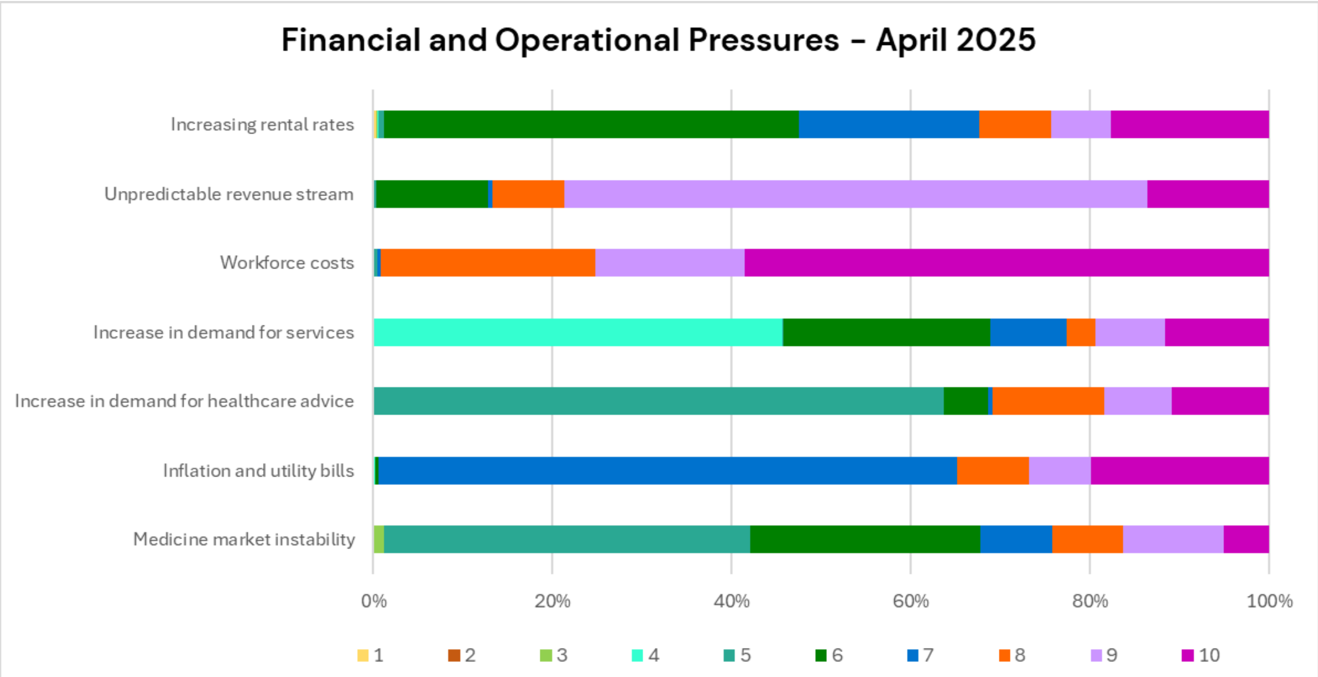
Respondents warned of low morale and exhaustion across the workforce and a feeling that the network remains at risk as funding increases are expected to be absorbed by inflationary costs.

Pressures Tracker

For tracking purposes, we repeated the question on pharmacy pressures from previous surveys. Participants were again asked to rank pressures from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest pressure.

The most intense pressures reported by pharmacy owners are workforce costs, unpredictable revenue stream and inflation and utility bills.

The table below shows the pressures tracked, with 10 being the highest pressure and one the lowest.



Using the data

The Committee reviewed headlines and preliminary analysis from the 2025 Pharmacy Pressures Survey, as well as the opinion polling on the CPCF settlement. As always, Committee members considered the results whilst also drawing on this valuable information, augmented with feedback from the Regional Representatives, at various stages throughout the meeting.

Members noted that the findings largely confirmed their own experiences of the continued pressures and lack of confidence in terms of business investment, but the data is valuable to put in front of policymakers and those who influence them.

The results were also considered in terms of our ongoing influencing work, including pressing for funding uplifts and other improvements for the sector.

Over the summer we worked used the findings of this report to secure national media coverage in the Mirror, the Independent, the Daily Mail, ITV News (broadcast during Good Morning Britain) and a number of other outlets, warning that pharmacies in England are still 'teetering on the brink' and that many are still at risk of closure. We also shared the results with a wide range of media publications, MPs, Peers, think tanks, patient groups and other pharmacy advocates.

Regular polling of pharmacy owners will remain an important tool for us in gauging sentiment and consulting on key issues across the sector. We will keep surveys short to minimise the burden on owners, while still providing the opportunity and direct channel to feed into Committee discussions for those who wish to do so.

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