

COMMUNITY PHARMACY: YOUR FRONT DOOR TO HEALTH

A local lifeline for patients

Pharmacies are a local lifeline and vital to the health of the nation. Often the first port of call for advice and treatment, pharmacies are a key part of community based health & social care. Pharmacies provide a range of NHS services, ensure people can get face-to-face care without an appointment, and take pressure off GPs and hospitals. There is potential for so much more.

Community Pharmacy Fast Facts

- 1.6 million visits each day
- >1bn prescriptions dispensed annually
- 6.6 million prescription interventions, many life saving
- 96% of people can get to a pharmacy within 20 minutes on foot or public transport
- Community pharmacy delivers £6bn of value at a cost to the NHS of £2.8bn
- Deprived areas have a higher number of pharmacies per head of population than more affluent areas (12% more)

Relieving pressure on the NHS

Your local pharmacy is one of the few places in the health service where you can simply walk in off the street and get treatment and professional healthcare advice without an appointment.

It is possible to divert millions more GP consultations to community pharmacy, through a combination of public education, nationwide coverage of minor ailments schemes (such as DMIRS) and closer integration between pharmacies and other parts of the NHS. Up to 18% of GP consultations and 8% of A&E visits are for common illnesses such as coughs, colds and rashes, which can be conveniently treated in pharmacies.

Community pharmacies and the NHS Long Term Plan

People access NHS care in community pharmacies more frequently than they do any other part of the health service. So it's right that the plan states an aim to "make more use of community pharmacies to engage with patients". The plan clearly signals that the NHS wants pharmacists to support the prevention agenda and urgent care, and provide part of the workforce solution in primary care.

"We will work with government to make greater use of community pharmacists' skills and opportunities to engage patients..." (NHS Long Term Plan, January 2019)

Pharmacies under pressure

The current turbulent financial situation in pharmacy is seriously affecting morale across the sector. This has to change so that pharmacies can step up, energised, to meet the challenges laid out in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Just when the NHS wants to “make greater use of community pharmacists’ skills and opportunities to engage patients” (NHS Long Term Plan), the current financial challenges are a powerful disincentive to pharmacy owners to invest in NHS services.

In a recent survey of National Pharmacy Association members (January 2019), 69% of independent pharmacies said that cash flow is currently having a “critically negative effect” on their ability to operate and sustain a successful pharmacy business.

What can Government and NHS England do to help?

We need Government to see local pharmacies as a solution to many long standing problems in the NHS, and to act decisively to unlock the sector’s huge potential. With consistent support from Government, pharmacies can do much more to:

- Take pressure off GPs and hospitals
- Make access to NHS care more convenient
- Help people with long term conditions
- Tackle medicines waste and save the NHS money
- Reduce health inequalities
- Be the front door to good health

We would like the Department of Health & Social Care to:

- Agree a long-term funding plan for the sector
- Put in place levers to facilitate further commissioning of pharmacy services
- Facilitate community pharmacy’s integration with Primary Care Networks
- Set out a vision for what Government wants from pharmacies – which would enable the sector to plan more effectively for the future

*“I want to see community pharmacies doing much more...
We need to make sure that we support our community
pharmacies so that they are able to deliver.”*

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, February 2019

For more information contact the National Pharmacy Association at: independentsvoice@npa.co.uk

The NPA is the representative voice of independent community pharmacies across the UK and a key provider of services to the pharmacy sector.