



## Why do we need a #SaveOurPharmacies campaign?

### Patient Messaging: Summary



1.

#### Pharmacies are always here for you:

-  At least 1.6 million people a day visit a community pharmacy for healthcare advice and treatments. They offer a degree of access to NHS support that is unmatched anywhere else in the health service.
-  Pharmacies take pressure off other parts of the health service, freeing up GP appointments and reducing unnecessary hospital visits.




2.

#### Now we need *your* help, so that we can keep doing this vital work for you and your families

-  Long term underfunding combined with rising costs means that many pharmacies are losing money and could be forced to close.
-  Please speak out, to stop that happening.




3.

#### Government must act now, to prevent your local pharmacy services from collapsing

-  We need emergency funding to keep pharmacies viable in the short term, including getting through the winter period.
-  We need a commitment to sustainable funding in the longer term.
-  NHS England should commission a fully funded 'Pharmacy First' service that will allow pharmacies to provide even more convenient advice and treatment for common illnesses, while also freeing up GP and hospital appointments.

4.

#### This is what you can do:

-  Write to your MP
-  Share our messages on social media using the hashtag #saveourpharmacies
-  Sign our petition

## More Detailed Messaging and Statistics

### Community pharmacies are the lifeblood of local communities.

- Pharmacies are always here for you, open extended hours and ready to support patients and the public with a whole range of health conditions.
- Pharmacies are the front door to the NHS for many people.
- Pharmacies dispense medicines safely and provide healthcare advice alongside a range of NHS services.
- Without pharmacies, primary care and with it the whole NHS could not function.

#### Key statistics:

- 1.03 billion prescription items were dispensed by community pharmacies and appliance contractors in England in 2020/21 ([NHSBSA](#)).
- More than **1.2 million informal consultations a week – or 65 million a year** – are taking place in England’s community pharmacies ([PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2022](#)). These informal consultations do not have specific funding attached to them.
- Every week, pharmacies help over 865,000 patients who are presenting at the pharmacy for clinical advice about symptoms and over 251,000 patients who have questions about an existing medical condition ([PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2022](#)).
- Nearly a quarter of a million consultations are carried out in community pharmacy every week because patients are unable to access their preferred part of the healthcare system ([PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2022](#)).
- Over half a million consultations a week occur in each community pharmacy for clinical advice alone, where no sale of a medicine is made ([PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2022](#)).
- Their central locations and convenient opening times mean that 89.2% of the population in England can access a community pharmacy within a 20-minute walk. Crucially access is greater (99.8%) in areas of highest deprivation ([BMJ Open, 2014](#)).
- Local pharmacies are often people’s first and sometimes only contact with a healthcare professional ([Public Health England](#)).

Community pharmacies are at breaking point and need your help to keep providing frontline care to patients and members of the public. We need help with:

**a) Fair funding**

- Funding for pharmacies has been cut by 30% in real-terms since 2015 despite rising costs and ever-increasing patient demand.
- Community pharmacy teams are under more extreme pressures than ever before.
- Pharmacies desperately need an urgent increase in funding from the Government to prevent widespread closures.
- Without this support, patient access to vital healthcare services will be severely diminished.

**Key statistics:**

- Pharmacies rely on NHS funding for some 90% of their income ([PSNC Four Point Plan](#)).
- Since 2015, pharmacy funding has been cut by 30% in real terms, despite overall NHS spending growing by 3.4% per year ([PSNC Four Point Plan](#)).
- There is currently an annual funding shortfall of more than £67,000 per pharmacy in England – money which could be invested in staff to provide vital NHS services ([CCA 2023](#)).
- 97% of pharmacy companies report that costs are rising ([PSNC Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2022](#)).
- 61% of pharmacy business owners/head office representatives said they were concerned about their ability to keep their pharmacies open ([PSNC Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2022](#)).
- Since 2015, there has been a net loss of 720 pharmacies (CCA, 2023).
- Between 2015 – 2022, there has been a net loss of 1,000+ GP practices and community pharmacies in England. Worryingly, 37% of those net permanent closures have occurred in the 20% most deprived parts of England, where healthcare need is likely to be higher. ([CCA, 2023](#)).
- A study by Ernst and Young (EY) for the NPA (2020) predicted that 72 percent of family-owned pharmacies could be loss-making by the end of 2024 if the current contractual arrangements remain unchanged ([NPA 2020](#)).
- A subsequent report by academics from LSE and UCL warned that thousands of pharmacies could be forced to close in the years ahead ([NPA 2022](#)).
- There were 24,601 unplanned temporary pharmacy closures in England in the 12 months from November 2021 to October 2022 ([PSNC Critical Pressures Briefing](#)). Pharmacies only close temporarily when they are forced to do so by circumstances beyond their control.
- An immediate injection of funding of at least £500m is needed to protect critical patient service ([PSNC Critical Pressures Briefing](#)).

### **b) Pharmacies need support with a growing workforce crisis.**

#### **Key statistics:**

- Workforce issues have led to locum pharmacist costs rising by 80% in the past year alone, and staffing costs overall have grown by close to 70% since 2015/16, with this expected to rise beyond 100% by 2024/25 ([PSNC Critical Pressures Briefing](#)).
- 91% of pharmacy business owners/head office representatives and 82% of pharmacy team members said their pharmacies were experiencing staff shortages ([PSNC Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2022](#)).
- In 2010, staff costs made up 53% of pharmacy business costs, but our mid-point estimate puts staff costs at 84% of the current available funding envelope by 2022/23 ([PSNC Four Point Plan](#)).

### **c) Pharmacies need protection from external shocks to the medicines supply market.**

#### **Key statistics:**

- 67% of pharmacies are having to deal with medicine supply issues every day ([PSNC Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2022](#)).
- Pharmacy teams spend many hours trying to resolve these supply issues so that patients are not affected by them. The average spent by respondents' teams was 5.3 hours per week ([PSNC Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2022](#)).
- 75% of pharmacies have reported experiencing aggression from patients due to medicine supply issues ([PSNC Pharmacy Pressures Survey 2022](#)).
- Many pharmacies are reporting dispensing at a loss with a [record 198 price concessions granted in December](#) (this is where the NHS Drug Tariff was significantly below what pharmacies were paying for those medicines).

### **3. Community pharmacies could and would like to do more to support the health needs of their communities through a Pharmacy First service**

- We want the Government to commission a fully-funded Pharmacy First Service, allowing patients to have walk-in consultations for minor conditions.
- A Pharmacy First service will create greater capacity and resilience in primary care.
- Pharmacies will be able to treat patients with minor ailments, thus freeing up capacity for GPs to care for patients who need it most.
- A Pharmacy First service in England would mirror the successful approaches taken in Scotland and Wales.
- A Pharmacy First service would provide accessible care, help to put pharmacies on a sustainable financial footing and ease the pressure on general practice.

**Key statistics:**

- Tens of thousands of people struggled to contact or see their GP during the first year of the pandemic. This has left patients feeling frustrated and confused, with certain groups at greater risk of struggling to access the support they needed (including some of the most vulnerable). This trend has continued with ongoing reports of delays to get GP appointments. ([Healthwatch, 2022](#))
- Poorer areas suffer the most from GP shortages. Since pharmacies are embedded within local communities making them easily accessible; particularly in areas of deprivation, it is all the more important, that patients in these areas can continue to access appropriate healthcare and advice for minor illness. ([University of Cambridge, Primary Care Unit, 2022](#))
- Up to 65 million consultations providing advice to members of the public now take place in pharmacies each year. ([PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2022](#))
- Demand for walk-in healthcare advice and support from patients has risen; up 14% in February 2022 compared to the previous year. ([PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2022](#))
- More than 55% of patients presenting for a consultation at a pharmacy said they would have gone to their general practice or an emergency department if the pharmacy team had not been able to support them. ([PSNC Pharmacy Advice Audit 2022](#))
- We estimate an established Pharmacy First service would increase demand across the network by 31% with patients who would have previously chosen their GP first, and analysis estimates general practice visits prevented would increase to over 47m annually, which would otherwise have a cost to the NHS of £1.85bn. (PSNC analysis)
- The sector will need an additional £400m in new cash investment to build on existing, stretched resources to meet this new demand. ([PSNC Pharmacy First Briefing](#))

For further information & resources or to get in touch, visit:  
[www.SaveOurPharmacies.co.uk](http://www.SaveOurPharmacies.co.uk)