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# COMMUNITY PHARMACY: INDISPENSABLE TO DELIVERING THE NHS 10 YEAR HEALTH PLAN FOR ENGLAND



# NATIONAL PHARMACY ASSOCIATION BRIEFING ON THE TEN-YEAR HEALTH PLAN FOR ENGLAND



Community pharmacies can play a significant role in achieving the Government's vision for the NHS in England over the next decade.

The NHS 10-Year Health Plan represents a significant opportunity to improve care for patients in their neighbourhoods through collaboration between community pharmacy, general practice and other parts of primary care and the broader health system by delivering shifts from hospital to community care, analogue to digital, and sickness to prevention.

The National Pharmacy Association believes there are huge opportunities for community pharmacy to deliver greatly expanded services for patients, ease pressure across the NHS and improve outcomes for patients through better treatment, more efficient use of medication and prevention.

The current service remains significantly underfunded, but modest investment – small by the scale of NHS spending – would secure the pharmacy network and unlock rapid and positive reform.

The system remains extremely fragile with more than 1,300 pharmacies closing in a decade and most now running at a loss. While recent funding uplifts have been helpful, Ministers rightly acknowledge that there is work still to be done.

However, adequate core funding and contract reform opens the possibility to transform services for patients and remove pressure from GPs and hospital services.

- Community pharmacies are already in the heart of neighbourhoods
- They enjoy high levels of trust and offer a range of walk-in NHS health services and advice
- Community pharmacies have very successfully offered expanded services from Covid and Flu vaccinations to the pharmacy first service in England, and expanded versions of minor ailment and walk-in services in Scotland and the other devolved nations
- There is significant opportunity for improved access to care through pharmacy management of long-term conditions and point of care testing, to support GP and other primary care services.

## Background

The Darzi Review described the NHS as in 'serious trouble'<sup>1</sup>. That resonates strongly in community pharmacy, where there is significant potential for stabilisation and positive reform to create better outcomes for communities.

**Community pharmacies can deliver solutions.** They are well represented in low-income and deprived areas, close to where people live, and ideally placed to offer easily accessible neighbourhood services.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Health and Social Care: Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England ('Darzi Review') November 2024 – Access [here](#).

Pharmacies have driven down medicine prices and offered huge value for money. They have the potential to do much more to manage repeat medication, long term condition monitoring and minor ailments, freeing other, costly parts of the NHS to focus on more specialist services.

The NHS 10-year plan includes many areas in which community pharmacy can support the Government's ambitions<sup>2</sup>. However, the elephant in the room is that it does not formally recognise the extent of the sector's current underfunding, and the plan lacks detail on how community pharmacy will be supported to fulfil its new expanded role.

- NHS-commissioned economic analysis of the pharmacy sector estimates it is underfunded by around £2.6bn a year. Although the gap is substantial, it is small in comparison with overall NHS spending.

There is an opportunity to stabilise pharmacy funding, releasing capacity in the short and medium term to ease pressure elsewhere in primary and secondary care.

- Frontier Economics and IQVIA found that services provided by all types of community pharmacies are significantly underfunded when full economic costs are compared to payments. Virtually all community pharmacies were estimated to have full economic costs greater than funding - with 47 per cent operating at a loss in the most recent financial year.

- But there is a huge opportunity to stabilise the network and deliver rapid change – with funding that represents a small, but vital, part of the NHS spending

<sup>2</sup> Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England (July 2025) – Access [here](#).

## How Community Pharmacy can help deliver the 10-year plan

The 10-Year Plan acknowledged the pivotal role that community pharmacy already plays and set out how we can expect community pharmacy's role to expand over the decade.

It argues that care should come to the patient, breaking siloes across primary, secondary, and community care<sup>4</sup> and creating a Neighbourhood Health Service, with care run by patient-centred teams.

The plan's key announcements are:

- Pharmacy will play a vital role in the

Neighbourhood Health Service, supporting minor ailments and long-term condition management, monitoring complex medication regimes, and treating obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol (based on the Canadian Model).

- Community Pharmacy will offer more clinical services and expand Independent Prescribing.

- Over the next 5 years, community pharmacy will transition from being mainly focused on dispensing medicines to becoming integral to the Neighbourhood Health Service

- Community Pharmacy to play a bigger role in wider prevention measures by expanding their role in administering vaccinations and screenings for patients at risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

## From hospital to the community

Community pharmacists are already well-placed, know the area's demographic needs, and can lead community professionals to embrace the shift to community care. Their in-depth knowledge can help reduce patients unnecessarily accessing primary or secondary care through schemes like Pharmacy First, which can treat conditions like UTIs within the community. But they can do more

- We can grow treatment of minor conditions through an expanded Pharmacy first service – already effective in Scotland
- We can grow a vaccination service – building on the success of Covid and Flu campaigns
- Pharmacies can support prevention by growing healthy living services – expanding on successful weight loss and smoking cessation programmes in many areas

- Medicines reviews and optimisation can be conducted by community pharmacists and be integrated into patient pathways. This move will help enhance the work of multidisciplinary teams across the health system

- We can grow screening services by giving pharmacists full access to the phlebotomy pathway

**However, more details are needed on how the government plans to facilitate this against the backdrop of a broader NHS restructuring.**

- The shift towards community care and the neighbourhood health system cannot be implemented without buy-in from community pharmacies at the ICB and neighbourhood health service levels.

- We need to take care that Neighbourhood Health Centres do not duplicate the work of existing local provider



## Moving from Analogue to Digital

The rollout of the online Single Patient Record (SPR) across the health system is a major change heralded in the 10 year plan.

The NPA has long called for improved single patient records to support patients' needs across the health service and, in turn, allow community pharmacists a simplified way to manage, review, and optimise medicines for patients, especially those with multiple long-term conditions.

The plan announces that:

- My NHS GP Tool will direct patients to pharmacists.
- The NHS app will allow patients greater choice in deciding on their preferred provider, booking directly for health tests, and managing their medication, vaccines, long-term conditions, children's health, and care receivers' health.

- The Government plans to modernise medicine dispensing. It argues that dispensing robots and Hub-and-Spoke models will allow patients to receive their medication faster.

The NPA argues that electronic repeat prescriptions should be available across all new Apps with a link to secondary care to allow pharmacists to know the number of repeat prescriptions the patient has taken and when a medicines review is due.

The NPA has also called for more details around funding for new platforms. We argue that the government should consider whether providers should pay for online systems

Pharmacy automation also raises potential concerns around clinical oversight, market access, and medicine supply resilience. For example, the government's own impact assessment of Hub-and-Spoke dispensing models revealed limited potential for savings given upfront costs and infrastructure investment.

- Many NPA members have already proactively invested in automation and robot dispensing in their pharmacies.

- The NPA is ready to work with the government to free time for pharmacists to see patients.

- An NHS App that directs patients to community pharmacy is vital because pharmacists can treat many minor ailments and have already done so via Pharmacy First, freeing up GP time.





## Sickness to Prevention

We strongly support the ambition to move towards preventative care, particularly in the most deprived areas where pharmacies have a strong community presence.

Community Pharmacy holds the clinical expertise to deliver on announcements within the NHS 10-year plan:

- Expanding their involvement in vaccine delivery and screening for the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Expansion of weight loss services and support.
- Increase uptake of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccinations among young people who have left school, to support the ambition to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040.

Community Pharmacy is already providing support and services for weight loss injections and weight management that align with the MHRA's criteria.

Recent NPA polling found that 44 per cent of adults support the NHS making weight loss injections free through their community pharmacy, rising to 55 per cent among those aged 16-34<sup>6</sup>.

However, to fully support the government's ambitions for weight management, a formal partnership across the NHS and community pharmacy is needed.

- We are calling for the HPV vaccine catch-up service to be expanded into community pharmacies as part of our recommendations for the National Cancer Plan for England.
- Community pharmacies already offer the vaccine privately and are eager to build on this in tandem with the government's ambitions to support Women's Health.
- More detail is needed on how these services will be funded through community pharmacy. We are calling for radical reform to the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) to ensure that services are as integrated as possible and minimising perverse incentives that risk NHS contractors – such as community pharmacies, ophthalmologists, dentists and GP practices - working against each other.
- There is also an urgent need for clarification on the rollout of neighbourhood health centres, as there is currently a risk of duplicating services that are already embedded in the community.



## How can you help?

We are delighted to connect you with pharmacies serving communities in their constituencies. We encourage you and your team to see for yourselves the difference to local healthcare they make and would urge you to ask questions, press for funding and reform to this essential NHS service, that supports your constituents.

Read more about the potential role of pharmacies in the future.

Read more about the ongoing financial challenges for local pharmacies in our '[Money's too tight to mention](#)' Report.

Thank you.

Please get in touch:

**Neil Bhayani, Senior Public Affairs and Policy  
Manager [N.Bhayani@NPA.co.uk](mailto:N.Bhayani@NPA.co.uk)**

**Sygy Collins, Public Affairs and Policy Officer  
[Sygy.Collins@NPA.co.uk](mailto:Sygy.Collins@NPA.co.uk)**

We would be delighted to provide briefings,  
data and meet with you and your team.