

Community Pharmacy and COVID-19

What the sector is doing to tackle the pandemic – and how you can support pharmacy teams working on the frontline to save lives

Community pharmacies are a local lifeline for patients and vital to the health of the nation. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, they have been working tirelessly on the frontline to ensure patients and the public can access critical services and life-saving medicines. While pharmacists and their teams continue to do everything they can to tackle this pandemic and provide for the public, we would value your support for community pharmacy at this challenging time.

What are pharmacies doing to support the fight against COVID-19?

- ✚ **Going above and beyond to ensure medicines are available** – Community pharmacists and their teams are doing everything they can to ensure the public continues to have a consistent and safe supply of medicines.
- ✚ **Prioritising vital services** – Pharmacies are focusing their time and effort on providing the most critical services at this time, including prescription services and patient support related to COVID-19.
- ✚ **Working tirelessly to relieve pressures on other parts of the NHS** – With many GP surgeries now providing care remotely, community pharmacies are playing a crucial role in providing face-to-face care on the frontline. We are the visible face of the NHS on the high street and throughout communities.
- ✚ **Exceeding patient demand** – Facing a huge surge in demand for medicines, advice and reassurance, pharmacy teams are working hard under extraordinary circumstances to support the health and wellbeing of the nation, including providing advice and information on avoiding infection and minimising the spread.
- ✚ **Returning to the frontline** – Driven by a deep commitment to protect patients, more than 3,000 former pharmacists and 2,000 former technicians have returned to the NHS to support their colleagues in community pharmacy¹.
- ✚ **Working incredible hours** – Pharmacies are managing unprecedented demand for services, with many opening early, closing late and working on bank holidays to ensure staff have time to maintain the pharmacy and serve the public.
- ✚ **Expanding services** – Pharmacies have quickly implemented crucial new services to ensure all patients can access the care they need. The *Pandemic Delivery Service* for example provides a last port of call to ensure the delivery of prescriptions to those self-isolating due to a high-risk of serious illness from infection and who have no other means of accessing medicines.

What is the scale of the COVID-19 challenge for community pharmacy?

- ✚ **Unprecedented demand for medicines and clinical advice** – Pharmacies have seen a 20% increase in demand for medicines² in addition to a significant rise in the number of people asking for clinical advice on common conditions, minor injuries and serious health conditions, including COVID-19³.
- ✚ **Significant pressures on staff** – Due to illness and self-isolation, some pharmacies are operating with 50% fewer staff, resulting in longer working hours. Some pharmacies have even been forced to close⁴.
- ✚ **Unprecedented financial pressures** – Where pharmacies were already experiencing cash flow problems due to real-term funding cuts prior to the current environment, the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the situation. In addition to the increased demand on services, pharmacies are facing new and increasing costs, such as rising costs of medicines and PPE, and an increasing wage bill to keep pharmacies open.
- ✚ **Increasing reports of abuse** – While it remains a small minority and most of the public are very supportive, we have seen a worrying increase in reports that pharmacy staff are experiencing verbal abuse, disorder and even violence from members of the public they are trying to help⁵.

What does community pharmacy need to continue combatting COVID-19 and saving lives?

- ✚ **Prioritise COVID-19 testing for pharmacists and their teams** so they can self-isolate if necessary and return to work as soon as possible or continue working without fear of spreading the virus.
- ✚ **Ensure all pharmacy teams have sufficient supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** to protect frontline staff and help limit the spread of the virus, to both staff and members of the public.
- ✚ **The public should be encouraged to act responsibly**, choosing to order prescriptions one week in advance rather than stockpiling medicines and self-isolating instead of visiting the pharmacy if experiencing symptoms of the virus.
- ✚ **Additional Government funding** for the sector in recognition of the increased and ongoing costs in responding to COVID-19. While the recent cash injection of £300m was welcomed by the sector, this was an advance payment rather than extra money.

A joint parliamentary briefing from [the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies](#), [the Company Chemists' Association](#), [the National Pharmacy Association](#), the [Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee](#), and the [Royal Pharmaceutical Society](#), as long-standing co-funders of the [All-Party Pharmacy Group](#)

What can you do to help?

We would greatly appreciate your help at this time and would encourage you to support the sector by:



Sharing these messages with your constituents – Please reassure your constituents that there is no need to stockpile medicines and encourage them to be courteous, patient and understanding as pharmacy teams continue to do all they can to provide vital services during this difficult time. Please also remind your constituents not to visit a pharmacy if they are showing symptoms of COVID-19.



Showing your support for community pharmacy in public – The sector needs your positive public support in the media and across social media channels. Pharmacy teams are already using **#pharmacyheroes** to shed light on the pressures they are facing, as well as the fantastic work they are doing to help patients. Please join the conversation and use the hashtag. Your public support would be much appreciated.



Echoing our 'asks' on social media – For community pharmacists and their teams to continue providing medicines and vital services across the country, please echo our call for more testing, PPE and funding as well as patience and understanding from the public as we adapt to the COVID-19 environment.



Asking the Government – What plans it has to ensure that pharmacists and their teams have the support they need to continue providing medicines and vital services on the frontline.

The value of community pharmacy in England:

- ✦ **Community pharmacy is the most frequented healthcare setting in the UK** with 95% of the population situated within 20 minutes of their local pharmacy⁶.
- ✦ **There are over 11,500 community pharmacies in England⁷ employing 42,990 pharmacists and 19,311 technicians⁸.**
- ✦ **The sector contributes a net value of approximately £3 billion to the NHS, public sector, patients and wider society** in England through just 12 services, with a further £1.9 billion expected to accrue over the next 20 years⁹.
- ✦ **Community pharmacies dispense more than 1 billion prescription items every year¹⁰.**
- ✦ **Community pharmacists make over 150 million interventions every year**, to a benefit of more than £250,000 per pharmacy or £54.61 for every resident of England¹¹.
- ✦ **114,275 patients used the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) in the first 10 weeks¹².** With NHS 111 referring patients to pharmacies as a first port of call, the CPCS diverts workload away from GPs, A&Es and urgent care services, thereby relieving resource pressures and freeing up staff time.

“Community pharmacies and their staff are working tirelessly on the frontline under significant pressures to provide medicines and vital services to patients and the public. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant new challenges for the health service and as many people’s first port of call, pharmacies are having to rapidly adapt to this new environment as we continue to support the NHS. Pharmacies need access to vital resources like prioritised testing and PPE, as well as adequate levels of funding to maintain the current level of service. But they also need our patience and understanding as they continue to go above and beyond. We would greatly appreciate your support for the sector at this challenging time”

– Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies, The Company Chemists' Association, The National Pharmacy Association, The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, and The Royal Pharmaceutical Society

For further information, please contact: APPG@lexcomm.co.uk

¹ <https://www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk/news/covid-19-GPhC-re-registers-3k-pharmacists>

² <https://www.pharmaceutical-journal.com/news-and-analysis/news/up-to-15-pharmacy-staff-off-work-in-some-chains-owing-to-covid-19/20207875.article>

³ <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/pharmacy-coronavirus-prescription-gp-medications-17953882>

⁴ <https://www.pharmaceutical-journal.com/news-and-analysis/news/up-to-15-pharmacy-staff-off-work-in-some-chains-owing-to-covid-19/20207875.article>

⁵ <https://thecca.org.uk/press-release-five-national-bodies-urge-public-to-treat-high-street-pharmacy-teams-with-respect/>

⁶ <https://www.local.gov.uk/community-pharmacy-offer-improving-public-health>

⁷ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/general-pharmaceutical-services/in-2008-09---2018-19-ns>

⁸ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/policy/wider-public-health-workforce/pharmacies-in-the-community.html>

⁹ <https://psnc.org.uk/psncs-work/about-community-pharmacy/the-value-of-community-pharmacy/>

¹⁰ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/general-pharmaceutical-services/in-2008-09---2018-19-ns>

¹¹ <https://psnc.org.uk/psncs-work/about-community-pharmacy/the-value-of-community-pharmacy/>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/patients-get-same-day-appointments-with-local-pharmacists>