

What can pharmacy do for your local community?

Community pharmacies straddle the ground where the local authority and NHS worlds meet. They are 'an integral part of the NHS'¹, a 'vital local service' and a 'community facility'².

The recent transfer of responsibilities for public health into local government and the new arrangements for local authority oversight of health commissioning, mean that ties between councillors and healthcare professionals such as community pharmacists need to grow.

Pharmacy basics

- There are over 11,400 community pharmacies in England, situated in high-street locations, in supermarkets and in residential neighbourhoods
- 96% of the population – even those in the most deprived areas – can get to a pharmacy within 20 minutes by walking or using public transport⁴
- 84% of adults visit a pharmacy every year⁴
- Excluding those who report never visiting a pharmacy, on average an adult visits a pharmacy 16 times a year, of which 13 visits are for health related reasons⁴
- An estimated 1.6 million visits to community pharmacies take place daily of which 1.2 million are for health related reasons⁴
- Pharmacies provide a convenient and less formal environment for those who cannot easily access or do not choose to access other kinds of health service⁴
- Most pharmacies (>85%) have private consultation areas
- Of all health professionals, pharmacists have the most comprehensive education and training in the use of medicines for the prevention and treatment of disease

Three strands of the shared local authority - community pharmacy agenda

Public health - central government has recognised pharmacy as 'a valuable and trusted public health resource'¹. Community pharmacies have a track record in delivering public health services – helping people to stop smoking, manage their weight, practise safe sex and reduce/stop their use of illegal drugs.

Support for independent living - pharmacies provide services that help people remain independent for longer, by helping them understand and manage their medicines.

Social capital - a community pharmacy is one of the core businesses which can make a difference between a viable high street and one that fails commercially – thereby sustaining communities and building social capital³.

Public Health

Community pharmacies are providing a growing range of public health services (see overleaf) that are producing positive outcomes, notably for people in deprived or vulnerable circumstances.

As community pharmacies are uniquely well positioned to reach out to the population – including 'apparently well' people – on a large scale, there is considerable public health benefit to be gained by extending the range and reach of these services.



What can pharmacy do for your local community?



A new concept highlighted in the Government's Public Health White Paper is the 'Healthy Living Pharmacy', which brings together a number of these public health services in one location. This has been successfully piloted in Portsmouth⁵ and further tested in more than twenty sites around the country⁶.

Support for independent living

Community pharmacies provide a range of services to support people to live independently in their own homes, including support with re-ordering repeat medicines / the NHS repeat dispensing service; home delivery of medicines to the housebound; appropriate provision of multi-compartment compliance aids and other interventions such as reminder charts to help people remember to take their medicines; rehabilitation services following discharge from hospital; falls assessment / reduction services; and signposting patients or their carers to additional support and resources related to their condition or situation.

Community pharmacy and social capital

Community pharmacies fulfil a social function by providing a space for individuals to develop networks of trust and mutual support. For example, for many older people who live alone, a visit to a pharmacy constitutes valued social interaction.

Secure health infrastructure is important to maintain resilient communities, notably in remote, rural locations. Community pharmacists have made a commitment to their local community by virtue of their financial investment, and present a sustainable asset.

Pharmacies provide employment for local people and contribute to the economic prosperity of their local community by preserving local shopping access³.

For these reasons, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees of some local authorities have taken a keen interest in the viability of their local community pharmacy network.

Health and Wellbeing Boards now have the responsibility to develop, update and publish local Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments (PNAs), which identify plans for improving health, and which aid NHS England's decision making on the granting of new NHS contracts to community pharmacies.

Visit www.psn.org.uk for more information on community pharmacy services.

References

1. A Vision for Pharmacy for Pharmacy in the New NHS. Department of Health, 2003
2. Draft Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6): Planning for Town Centres. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003
3. Improving shopping access for people living in deprived neighbourhoods: a paper for discussion. Department of Health, 1999
4. Pharmacy in England: building on strengths – delivering the future. Department of Health, 2008
5. Healthy lives, healthy people: Our strategy for public health in England. Department of Health, 2010
6. Evaluation of the Healthy Living Pharmacy pathfinder Work Programme 2011-2012, RPS, CCA, NPA, PSNC

Public Health

Examples of community pharmacy services

- **6 health promotion campaigns** carried out in community pharmacies annually for NHS England
- **Substance misuse services:** needle and syringe services; supervised consumption of medicines to treat addiction, e.g. methadone; Hepatitis testing and Hepatitis B and C vaccination; HIV testing; provision of naloxone to drug users for use in emergency overdose situations
- **Sexual health services:** emergency hormonal contraception services; condom distribution; pregnancy testing and advice; Chlamydia screening and treatment; other sexual health screening, including syphilis, HIV and gonorrhoea; contraception advice and supply (including oral and long acting reversible contraception)
- **Stop smoking services:** proactive promotion of smoking cessation through to provision of full NHS stop smoking programmes
- **NHS Health Checks for people aged 40-74 years:** carrying out a full vascular risk assessment and providing advice and support to help reduce the risk of heart disease, strokes, diabetes and obesity
- **Weight management services:** promoting healthy eating and physical activity through to provision of weight management services for adults who are overweight or obese
- **Alcohol misuse services:** providing proactive alcohol brief intervention and advice with referral to specialist services for problem drinkers
- **Pandemic and Seasonal 'Flu services:** providing continuity of dispensing of essential medicines, provision of antiviral medicines; 'flu vaccination services

Examples of local community pharmacy services can be found at:
www.psn.org.uk/database

Partnership with your local pharmacies – steps you can take now

Links with community pharmacists leading the development of services can be made via the Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC). A visit to a local community pharmacy can also be arranged to demonstrate how services are provided for local people.

Contact details for your LPC can be found at www.psn.org.uk.

