

Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR) Community Pharmacy MP Update, April 2024

1. Pharmacy First

- The Pharmacy First, community pharmacy service, launched nationally across community pharmacies on the 31st of Jan 2024.
- The Pharmacy First service enables patients and the public to visit pharmacies, as a first port of call, for help with a range of common minor illnesses.
- Around 98% of community pharmacies across England have registered to provide the service, including within LR.
- Pharmacy First enables community pharmacists to provide advice and supply prescription-only medicines, including antibiotics and antivirals where clinically appropriate, to treat seven common health conditions without the need to visit a GP.
- The seven conditions are:

Sinusitis 12 years and over	Sore throat 5 years and over	Acute otitis media 1 to 17 years	Infected insect bite 1 year and over
Impetigo 1 year and over	Shingles 18 years and over	Uncomplicated UTI Women 16 to 64 years	

What are the benefits of the Pharmacy First service?

For the wider NHS

- Pharmacy First aims to help free up 10 million GP appointments a year by next winter.
- This will give GPs time and space to see patients with more complex conditions.

For patients

- By thinking 'Pharmacy First', patients and the public will find it easier and quicker to get the help they need and bypass the 8am rush to book an appointment with their GP.
- According to a 2023 YouGov Poll, 75% of people agree that they would like to see community pharmacies offering more healthcare services such as treating urinary tract infections or sore throats.
- Four in five people in England can reach a community pharmacy within a 20-minute walk and there are twice as many pharmacies in the most deprived communities, making access to care quicker and more convenient.

For pharmacy owners

- Pharmacy owners have been calling for this service for many years. In July 2023, 86% told us they wanted to provide the service.
- In 2022, it was estimated that 65 million informal healthcare consultations were taking place in England's community pharmacies every year, with no specific funding attached to them.
- This service goes some way to injecting some much-needed funding into the community pharmacy sector, particularly after real terms cut of 30% since 2015.

Will Pharmacy First have an impact on antimicrobial resistance?

- NHS England has led the work to ensure that the clinical pathways for the Pharmacy First service and the associated Patient Group Directions (PGDs) – the legal framework that allows a pharmacist to supply certain prescription-only medicines – will allow community pharmacists to supply antimicrobials, only where clinically appropriate, without increasing the risks of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

- Pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals who understand medicines and their potential risks, and the experience of the Scottish and Welsh Pharmacy First schemes, not to mention many **local services** in England, suggests that pharmacists are more cautious about supplying antibiotics than other healthcare professionals.
- Pharmacists understand the issues and have already been contributing to anti-microbial resistance efforts for several years through their Pharmacy Quality Scheme.

Ambitions for the future:

- Community pharmacy has ambitions for the service, beyond what is currently offered.
- This could include extension to treatment of other conditions – such as chest infections – as well as building on other services and diagnostics. However this is only possible with the right funding.
- The [Vision for Community Pharmacy](#) developed by Nuffield Trust and The King's Fund and commissioned by Community Pharmacy England, provides further policy insight on how we could build on and develop the community pharmacy service to support the nation's health and wellbeing.

The report makes several suggestions including:

- Expanding other clinical services in pharmacies such as delivering more NHS vaccinations or supporting women's health.
- Building on the Blood Pressure Checks Service to offer treatment and management of hypertension.
- Looking at the management of long-term conditions like asthma and diabetes.
- Pharmacists referring directly for diagnostics, e.g. blood tests and to secondary care where appropriate, rather than sending patients back to their GP.
- Pharmacists undertaking targeted health checks and screening for at-risk groups.

To read a summary of the Vision report,
scan the QR code:



2. Other new pharmacy services

Pharmacy Contraception Service (PCS)

- From December 2023, thousands of women have been able to get their contraceptive pill from their local pharmacy.
- The service involves the initiation of oral contraception (OC) and routine monitoring and ongoing supply of OC via a patient group direction (PGD).
- The aim of PCS is to offer greater choice from where people can access contraception services and create additional capacity in primary care and sexual health clinics (or equivalent) to support meeting the demand for more complex assessments.

Blood Pressure Checks

- Pharmacists are also increasing the number of life-saving blood pressure checks given to at-risk patients over the next year, with a Government ambition to deliver **2.5 million a year** by spring 2025.
- It is estimated this could **prevent more than 1,350 heart attacks and strokes** in the first year.

3. Pressures on the Community Pharmacy sector

- In order to deliver further services in community pharmacies, they must be commissioned in the context of fair, sustainable funding.

- The unsustainable financial situation, because of a decline in core NHS funding by 30%, inflationary pressures and inability to pass on rising costs, has resulted in intolerable pressures for community pharmacies and an increase in pharmacy closures.
- This situation is unsustainable and requires urgent attention in the form of an immediate review of the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF), to ensure that it delivers the funding pharmacies need to serve their patients.
- Pharmacy funding requires an urgent uplift if it is to continue to support the network of pharmacies, and the future CPCF must include an uplift mechanism to prevent funding from falling short due to rising costs and inflationary pressures.

4. Shared Care Records Initiative

- Shared care records are patients' electronic health records. They include information from various care settings e.g. GP practice and secondary care.
- However, at present, community pharmacies across England do not have access to Shared Care Records (LLR CR).
- Community Pharmacy Leicestershire and Rutland is pleased to announce that are launching a pilot program allowing, for the first time, community pharmacies across LLR to access shared care records.
- The LLR shared care record programme is being progressed by the LLR Integrated Care Board, University Hospitals of Leicester, Leicestershire Partnership Trust, the three upper tier local authorities (Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council) as well as other partners such as LOROS, East Midlands Ambulance Service, community pharmacy and DHU111.

Allowing community pharmacies access to shared care records will:

1. Provide an individual's up-to-date health and care information all in one secure place.
2. Enable more joined up and safer care.
3. Reduce duplication of tests and referrals for an individual.
4. Help prevent someone having to repeat their story each time they receive care from a different organisation.
5. Create more time devoted to providing care, less time spent on paperwork.
6. Enable better decision making among clinical and care staff.
7. Mean access to better information, faster; improving an individual's experience of care.

Our ask of all LLR MPs:

- Visit a pharmacy in your constituency, please get in touch with chiefofficer@leics-lpc.co.uk so we can help organise this.
- Sign a cross-party letter to the Health Secretary, welcoming the service and calling for its expansion.