

Pharmacy Funding in Crisis

Community Pharmacies have been here for you when you needed them most throughout the pandemic, with many staff making personal sacrifices to ensure people got the access they needed to medicines, advice, and services.

The Government has reduced and then frozen pharmacy funding since 2016. With the current cost pressures pharmacies are finding it hard to survive. We're being asked to do more work for less money. That's why you may have seen your pharmacy shorten its opening hours, reduce staff, and stop providing some free services such as deliveries and medicine trays.

KEY MESSAGES AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Delivery of Medicines

During the pandemic, the government introduced a delivery service for those that needed it the most at various times of heightened restrictions. This funding has stopped, and many pharmacies are reviewing their position to see if they are able to offer delivery for free in a higher wage and fuel situation. You may be asked to contribute towards the cost of delivering your medicines if you require it.

2. Stock Shortages

Shortages have increased in recent months – believed to be driven by Brexit, workforce issues in manufacturing/logistics and the effect of the war in Ukraine. Pharmacies are spending huge amounts of time trying to source your medicines and sometimes it's not possible to get them at the price the NHS requires.

3. Workforce Pressures

Pharmacy staff are hard to recruit and retain.

Government has split the pharmacy workforce; recruiting new roles to help GPs many of whom - pharmacists and technicians - have come from the community pharmacy pool of staff. This means demand on our teams is high and along with absence rates post-pandemic some pharmacies occasionally must take the drastic step to close (a last resort as NHS England can then fine a pharmacy for doing this).

4. Prescription Turnaround Time

Turnaround time on prescriptions can be challenging. We recommend you order 7 days before you intend to collect your medicine to ensure a smooth journey. The surgery will need to examine, approve and sign your prescription request and the pharmacy will subsequently need to order, assemble and clinically check your prescription. Often the 48 hours suggested only allows for the surgery aspect of the service.

5. What is my pharmacy doing to survive?

- Examining what they can offer that the government does not pay for.
- Managing their stock accurately and efficiently.
- Planning staff as far ahead as possible.
- Managing the prescription and service queues.

6. What can I do to help?

- Order your medication in plenty of time (but no more than 7 days before it is due).
- Be kind to your pharmacy teams.
- Write to your MP, highlight how valuable your pharmacy is to you.

Remember you can always ask your pharmacist if you have any questions about your medicines.

Your pharmacy team will always try to help you. Government neglect of pharmacy means that this is becoming increasingly difficult.

You have the right to collect medicines that have been prescribed for you from any pharmacy you choose. Your choice should not be influenced by an app choosing for you, letters you receive in the post, or by any healthcare professional.



If you have any questions or require any additional information, please contact Alison Williams at alison@cpcw.org.uk

