

Dear Minister,

As Members of Parliament, we want to raise with you our deep and growing concern over the unprecedented pressures facing the community pharmacy sector in England, and the risks that this poses to patient care and safety, if left unchecked.

Community pharmacies have the potential to do more to support and deliver clinical services to patients, building on the agility that they demonstrated during the pandemic. But many pharmacies in our constituencies are currently operating at a loss. This stems from a DHSC and NHS funding arrangement which is no longer fit for purpose, but which provides pharmacies with 90% or more of their income. This funding has reduced by 30% in real terms since 2015. The impact of this is already causing pharmacies to cut back services and reduce their opening hours.

We fear that if these pressures are left unaddressed, we could see a large number of unplanned and permanent pharmacy closures in the near future. This would run the risk of our constituents being unable access their prescription medications and other pharmacy services which they rely upon. Those pharmacies which remain will not have sufficient resources to take on all the patients displaced by closures which could endanger some of the most vulnerable people in society and place further pressure on the primary care network.

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To prevent this from happening, we call for your urgent consideration of three measures:

1. A short-term financial injection of at least £400 million to stabilise the position and enable pharmacies to keep their doors open.
2. A commitment to working with the sector to create a fair and fit for purpose future funding model that ensures sustainability and properly funds pharmacies for what they do. This must enable us to build positively the contributions that pharmacies can make.
3. A fairly funded Pharmacy First service. With adequate funding, we believe this could alleviate wider pressures in the primary care system and the NHS.

Yours,