

Writing to MPs: Guidance

Background

Our ongoing priority is to make strong and urgent representations to Government and the NHS, seeking long-term investment and support for community pharmacies. **Our overarching objective is to ensure Government delivers on its commitment to a sustainable funding and operational model for community pharmacies: closing the funding gap, while continuing to develop the sector's role in healthcare positively.** All asks to MPs should contribute towards this objective.

Following the recent announcement of the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework for 2024/25 and 2025/26, we are continuing our political influencing campaign to gain wide and vocal support from MPs and Peers from across all parties, and to ask for their help in pressing Government to act to protect our community pharmacies for the long-term.

We have produced a short [CPCF Settlement Announcement Briefing](#) which sets out the implications for community pharmacies across England, along with a [briefing on the independent Economic Analysis](#) which sets out the scale of the funding gap. You may like to share these briefings in full when you write to your MP, or to use information from them in your letter. We need to ensure MPs understand the situation for pharmacies: despite the welcome investment in the sector as part of the CPCF arrangements for this year, we can expect to see pharmacies continuing to struggle financially and operationally, meaning people may continue to go without advice and medicines, and turning to other parts of the NHS.

Ongoing activities at a national level will include hosting cross-sector events in Parliament, supporting Parliamentary questions and debates, co-ordinating letters to Ministers, and engaging with Government and party advisors. Support from LPCs and pharmacy owners at a local level remains critical, and your help to engage with MPs would be very much appreciated.

Contacting your MP: Guidance

Personal letters and emails are much more powerful than a template letter in getting your MP onside, so we have deliberately produced this guidance rather than writing a template letter. You might like to follow the below format for your letter, or to pick and choose some of these



sections to include in an email. If you don't have time to write, you could try contacting them on social media or email their office to seek a meeting online or at their constituency surgery.

Please see our website for specific [guidance on hosting an MP visit](#).

Some general points to consider in any letter:

- Always remain polite and professional in tone
- Focus as much as you can on patients, and what the pressures mean for them
- If you are aligned with the MP's political views, it may help to mention this
- Throughout the letter, try to emphasise that after years of flat funding, the community pharmacy sector is on its knees, and action is needed to protect it for the long-term
- Facts and figures can be very persuasive – we have lots on our website, or you may be able to use information from your own area or pharmacy
- We must also keep reminding MPs of the value of local community pharmacies – what you offer for your local community, and what is at stake (for patients, the public, your staff members, the local neighbourhood, and other parts of the NHS) if that is lost
- Letters should finish with an ask of MPs: see suggestions below

1. Introduction

Introduce yourself and your business and include the address/postcode of the pharmacy where you work. If you also live in the constituency, say so. If you have met your MP before, remind them of the encounter and thank them for any previous support they gave you.

2. Pharmacy First

Start with a positive, if you can. Alongside the welcome investment in the sector (despite recognition it isn't enough in the long-term), you could talk about the Pharmacy First service and the positive impact it has had locally in terms of reducing pressures on other parts of the health service and reducing waiting times/increasing access for patients. It has recently been extended in the new CPCF arrangement, highlighting its success and potential. If possible, give some local statistics or anecdotes. Try to get across the message that this service demonstrates how pharmacies can help patients and the wider NHS, given the right funding and support.

You may like to include some of our general statistics as evidence for the positive impact that pharmacies have in their communities. Many of these are included in our recent [MP briefing](#).

3. Highlight that the investment into the sector is welcome but more needs to be done

It is important that you put across the fact that although the investment is a 30% increase on the 2023/24 settlement and is very welcome, the Government has also recognised the fact that it is not enough to stabilise the sector and has pledged to work towards a sustainable funding and operational model for community pharmacies.

You can say that you appreciate Ministers' recognition of the crucial role of community pharmacies in the future of the health sector and are keen for ongoing dialogue, but that ongoing dialogue must result in action due to the situation your pharmacy finds itself in.

4. Current pressures and workforce

Give an overview of the current pressures that you are experiencing and any changes you have had to make to how you operate. How are these impacting your staff, your business and your patients? What is the outlook, and what are your main worries for the year ahead?

You could mention workforce issues here as well as cost and inflationary pressures. You may like to give some examples of cost increases such as rises in energy bills, inflationary pressures, increasing instances of dispensing medicines at a loss due to market and pricing issues. MPs appreciate data, so please do share any financial specifics that you feel able to.

You can also reiterate that despite the recent welcome investment into the sector as part of the new CPCF, in the previous 10 years pharmacy funding was cut by over 30% in real terms since 2015, and mention that more than 90% of pharmacies' income comes from their NHS contractual funding. You can say that unlike other businesses, you cannot pass higher costs on to customers or patients, and should share your concerns about the sustainability and future of the business.

5. Disruption to patient services

Give an overview of how, due to these pressures, patients are being impacted. Talk about which services you have stopped or will likely need to stop soon. You could talk about things like patients having to wait longer for prescriptions and any temporary closures. You may like to quote some statistics related to permanent or temporary closures. Our latest briefings covering this can be found on the 'Information for Politicians' section on our website [here](#).

6. Risks

You could talk about the risks to your business and patients over the coming year and longer term should Government not keep its commitment to provide a sustainable funding and operational model. You could also convey that the pharmacy network is so fragile that further closures of pharmacies are still a risk, adding more critical pressures to other pharmacies. This means patients could suddenly find themselves being directed to alternative locations for access to medicines and pharmaceutical services – which may or may not be easily accessible to them – causing major disruption at a primary care level with inevitable upstream impacts for hospitals.

7. Conclusion

You could conclude with an emotional plea to urge your MP to act to help protect your pharmacy and to ensure patients can continue to access the lifesaving medicines they rely on.

You could get across the value of pharmacies: millions of patients, their carers, and the wider public, rely on community pharmacies every day. Pharmacies are pillars of the community, as well as vital and accessible healthcare centres. With over 24 million people on at least one repeat prescription, pharmacies dispense more than 1.1 billion prescriptions every year.

You should ask your MP to take action by contacting the Minister for Care Stephen Kinnock MP, as well as the Health Secretary, Wes Streeting MP, to them to act to stabilise the sector in the long term through a sustainable funding and operational model.

You may also like to ask MPs to support our wider needs for:

- Ongoing investment in community pharmacy's clinical future
- A plan to safeguard the pharmacy workforce
- Continued progress to investigate and improve medicine supply chain resilience and progress on work to look at ensuring fair access to margin

Other things that you could ask your MP to do include:

- Meet with you for an urgent discussion, or visit your pharmacy to learn more
- Request a meeting with Ministers on behalf of local pharmacies
- Ask questions and raise the serious issues pharmacies face in parliamentary debates



Please keep us informed of how your MP responds to you or get in touch if you need any further support with talking to your MP: comms.team@cpe.org.uk