

## **PHARMACY PROVISION**

### **BACKGROUND**

Community pharmacy operates on a contractor model meaning community pharmacies are usually independent businesses contracted by the NHS to provide certain services for local populations.

Community pharmacies are contracted and commissioned in England under the national five-year (2019 – 2024) Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) which was agreed between the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) in line with the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan. The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee is the body which the Secretary of State recognises as the representative of NHS community pharmacy contractors in England. From 1 April 2023, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) assumed responsibility for the commissioning and management pharmaceutical services from NHS England. NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB hosts the team delivering the day-to-day operation of the contracting function on behalf of the ICBs in the East of England, holding responsibility for contractual management and regulation of the market, contract management and community pharmacy services delivery. The Suffolk and Northeast Essex ICB have responsibility for delivering Pharmacy services within West Suffolk

### **PHARMACY PROVISION IN SUFFOLK AND WEST SUFFOLK**

Suffolk has 134 pharmacies (a reduction from 145 in 2018) for an estimated population of 761,246, in addition there are 42 dispensing GP practices providing pharmacy services. Current figures indicate that Suffolk has an average of 23.1 pharmacies per 100,000 of population, this compares to 20.6 per 100,000 of the population in England.

Within West Suffolk there are 43 pharmacies, 28 are community pharmacies, 14 are GP dispensing practices and 1 is a distance selling pharmacy. These figures include the closure of Lloyds pharmacies within Sainsburys supermarket at Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds respectively. The closure of these pharmacies was based on a business sustainability decision by the owners of Lloyds pharmacies and affected all 237 Sainsburys based pharmacies within the UK.

### **REDUCTION IN SERVICE PROVISION WEST SUFFOLK**

The loss of Lloyds pharmacies earlier this year at Sainsburys in Haverhill ( -78 hours per week) and Bury ( -101 hours a week) account for a total of 179 lost hours of pharmacy cover a week. Additionally Boots in Haverhill no longer offer pharmacy services on a Sunday (-6hours pw).

The following pharmacies within West Suffolk have also reduced their weekly opening hours this year.

### Haverhill

Haverhill pharmacy ( -23.25hrs pw)

Tesco pharmacy (-22hrs pw)

### Newmarket

Lords pharmacy (-12hrs pw)

### Bury St Edmunds

Asda pharmacy (-28hrs pw)

Swan pharmacy (-22hrs pw)

Tesco pharmacy (-22hrs pw)

Boots in Newmarket have extended their Sunday opening hours by 2 hours a week.

The total hours of pharmacy provision lost within West Suffolk this year is 312.25 hours a week.

The Pharmaceutical needs assessment which is carried out by the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board identifies that a significant reduction in pharmacy hours service provision has occurred, however it is their view that the distribution of pharmacies mean that access is still good across the county and that no gaps in service provision have been noted.

It is my belief that if the current trend of pharmacy closures and reduction in opening hours continues, service provision inevitably will be significantly negatively affected, in the first instance weekend cover and evening cover are likely to further diminish at an even greater rate that we are currently seeing.

Further closures are expected as the Boots chain has announced plans to close 300 pharmacies across the UK by the end of 2023. Currently the Suffolk and Northeast Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEE ICB) are awaiting details of sites affected in Suffolk HWB area.

## **REASONS FOR DIFFICULTY IN PROVIDING SERVICE**

Change in National Regulations: The NHS Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services (PLPS) Regulations 2013 introduced an option for 100 hours pharmacies to reduce their total weekly core opening hours to no less than 72 hours, subject to various requirements. The majority of Suffolk previous 100-hours pharmacies have reduced their core and total hours and as of 4 September 2023 there is one 100-hours pharmacy in Suffolk HWB area, located in Lowestoft.

Community Pharmacy England (the body that nationally represents community pharmacies) has suggested that the sector has been underfunded over recent years which has and is leading to subsequent closures nationally. There is a national shortage of the pharmacy workforce which is impacting all sectors including community pharmacy.

In 2019, a new Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework was agreed until March 2024; it was updated in 2021 following agreement with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee. This provided a commitment of almost £13 billion to community pharmacy through its contractual framework, with a commitment to spend £2.592 billion over five years from 2019-2024 (a reduction from £2.8 billion global sum for 2014/2015 funding settlement). Its aim was to provide five-year stability and reassurance to community pharmacy and enable businesses to make long term business decisions.

The challenge has been that the funding that was agreed at the start of the 5-year term has not been revised or uplifted in light of significant unforeseen increases/challenges for contractors, e.g., inflation rates, impact of pandemic, cost of living increases, workforce crisis, business rates, etc. Community Pharmacy England (CPE) have indicated that since 2016, the funding received by community pharmacies has declined by 30% in real terms. CPE reports that the Single Activity Fee no longer adequately funds contractors for the costs involved in medicines supply; a service which remains critical to patients, the NHS and the community pharmacy business model.

To enable effective understanding of community pharmacy provision and the context in which it currently operates the Scrutiny committee were given responses to the following questions. I have included a link to the responses and would recommend that members read these responses.

[Agenda Item 05c - Evidence Set 2 - Local Pharmaceutical Committee \(2\).pdf](#)

- a) What is the purpose of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)?
- b) What has changed since the publication of the PNA in 2022?
- c) How many closures have taken place of pharmacy services in Suffolk in the last 18 months?
- d) What are the key opportunities and challenges faced by pharmacy services in relation to the contractual framework?
- e) What are the key opportunities and challenges in relation to workforce?
- f) What are enhanced and advanced services and to what extent are these being delivered by providers in Suffolk?
- g) What work is taking place to ensure the role of pharmacies is fully integrated as part of the wider health and care system in Suffolk?
- h) How do pharmacies work with GP practices? How is pharmacy supporting the Primary Care Recovery Plan?
- i) What are the constraints on GP's providing dispensing services?
- j) To what extent do pharmacies have access to patient records?
- k) What is the role of pharmacy in supporting the public health prevention agenda?

- l) How are pharmaceutical services regulated?
- m) To what extent is the availability and pricing of medicine impacting upon dispensing of prescriptions in a timely manner, and what are the reasons for this?
- n) How can local authorities support the ICBs in addressing any issues relating to community pharmacy provision?

In response to the ongoing issues identified which relate to workforce issues the SNEE ICB has published the 2022-2027 pharmacy workforce strategy and I again recommend that members read this information.

[PowerPoint Presentation \(communitypharmacy.org.uk\)](https://communitypharmacy.org.uk)

It is noteworthy that the Panel who appeared at the HOSC and other stakeholders who submitted evidence to the committee were keen to stress, the proposed £645m over two years which has been identified to improve digital integration and expand community pharmacy services, is for the funding of new services and does not address the underfunding which exists within the current contract.

To summarise, community pharmacy both nationally and within Suffolk have been significantly negatively affected by real terms funding cuts over the duration of the current contract, which has led to pharmacy providers reducing the number of hours they provide to the local community, or as we have seen this year providers are leaving the sector completely. There are currently 82 FTE pharmacist posts unfilled within Suffolk, which has led to an undesirable and unsustainable level of expensive locum pharmacist utilisation. National regulations stipulate that pharmacies can only operate if a qualified pharmacist is on site.

Regarding workforce training stakeholders pointed out that unlike other colleagues in the primary care, there is no protected training time to allow for the professional development of pharmacy staff and this also negatively affects staff retention across all grades.

The Health and Social Care Committee (House of Commons Select Committee) has recently conducted an inquiry into pharmacy, to explore the issues impacting different types of pharmacy with a particular focus on community, primary care and hospital pharmacy services. The inquiry seeks to assess the current status of pharmacy in England and consider what the future of pharmacy could look like. It focuses on addressing current challenges, particularly around the funding model, digital infrastructure and workforce recruitment, training and retention. The inquiry completed evidence gathering on 6 July 2023 and, at the time of writing, the report from the inquiry has not been published.

## **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FORM HOSC**

The committee, having read submissions from stakeholders and listened to the panel felt that; due to the urgency of the situation regarding pharmacy provision in Suffolk it will write to the Secretary of State for health, requesting emergency funding to deal with the deficits that exist within the existing core funding contract. Additionally, it will request that community pharmacies be included within the weekly primary

care afternoon training shutdown, as there is no protected training time within the current contract.

The committee also recommends that the ICBs IT department align both the IT provision with GP surgeries and pharmacies, so there is integrated access to the patients record.

A full list of recommendations is contained within the Suffolk County Council HOSC minutes, which are published on SCC website.

The link for HOSC Information bulletin is attached, the bulletin includes update information requested by the Committee as well as information that a service considers should be made known to the Committee.

This Information Bulletin covers the following items:  
East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust – Suffolk Elective Orthopaedic Centre (ESEOC) – Dame Clare Marx Building  
Improving Palliative and End of Life Care in Suffolk  
DNA (Did not attend) appointment data.  
Phlebotomy (blood tests) Provision in Suffolk  
Aseptic Services Review in the East of England region

[Agenda Item 07a - Information Bulletin.pdf](#)

Cllr Andrew Martin