

5 July 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to ask for your support to empower our local pharmacies to play a greater role in our health and care system, tackle growing health challenges and support the NHS recovery.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, not only did community pharmacies remain open offering face to face healthcare advice to the nation, but they also played a huge role in delivering the COVID-19 vaccination programme, administering 24m+ vaccinations to date, distributed 25.1m lateral flow tests and ensured 6m vulnerable patients could access their medicines through a Pandemic Delivery Service. With the right support and funding, pharmacy could be a game-changer when it comes to taking pressure off other areas of the NHS and tackling the healthcare backlog. A fully funded 'Pharmacy First' service would be an excellent first step towards doing just that, but pharmacies also have much to offer in prevention, reducing health inequalities, and supporting people with long-term conditions.

There are 11,200 pharmacies across England and 89% of the population are less than a 20-minute walk from their nearest pharmacy, which rises to 99.8% in the most deprived areas. Pharmacies are the front door to the NHS and a lifeline for the most vulnerable patients. Harnessing their potential is one of the most impactful things we could do to improve access to primary care and 'level up'.

Pharmacies have absorbed year after year of real terms funding cuts, but despite their continued impressive performance, funding, workforce and commissioning pressures are now pushing our local pharmacies to the brink. **Since 2016, 639 pharmacies have closed in England.** This is equivalent to just short of one pharmacy closure per constituency. And now on top of spiralling costs and an uncertain future, pharmacy teams are experiencing a worrying trend of increased physical and verbal abuse. The time is right for a long-term vision that supports our local pharmacies to help more of our constituents.

We urge you to work with your Ministers, the community pharmacy sector, and frontline pharmacists across England, to keep our pharmacists safe, end the threat of pharmacy closures through a sustainable and fair approach to funding, and maximise the value of the community pharmacy network.

Community pharmacies have shown what they are capable of – it's now time for the Government to provide local pharmacies with the funding and resources that they deserve.

Yours Sincerely,