

Women's Health Position Statement

Women should expect to receive **high quality, consistent, culturally sensitive and comprehensive** clinical support at every stage from a supportive and skilled pharmacy team.

By **listening to and understanding what matters** to patients, we can deliver **accessible, inclusive and personalised** care that empowers women to make informed choices about their future health.

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Introduction

Pharmacists provide a vital role in supporting women's health.

To promote the continued development of pharmacists in this role, this position statement identifies key enablers that align with the strategic priorities outlined in National Women's Health Strategies across the UK.

- [**The Women's Health Plan for Wales**](#)
- [**The Women's Health Plan for Scotland**](#)
- [**Women's Health Strategy for England**](#)
- [**The Women's Health Survey for Northern Ireland**](#)

These strategies collectively emphasise the persistent **disparities in women's health** and the frequent experience of women **feeling unheard**.

Women continue to be underrepresented in clinical trial data, and all strategies are aligned in their call to focus on understanding **the changing health needs of women and girls** across their lives and the approach we take as health professionals to address this.

Inequalities in women's health persist across marginalised communities, women of colour and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

To successfully advance and shape pharmacists' roles in providing high quality women's healthcare, it is **essential to understand and capture the views of women with lived experience**, across the full range of menopause services and at different stages in life.

RPS developed a Women's Health Study: A review of menopause service provision, to engage with women to understand and capture lived experience. This **highlighted the need for clear, consistent, culturally sensitive and accurate advice** on menopause and importantly, **the trust and confidence women have in pharmacists** to deliver this successfully.

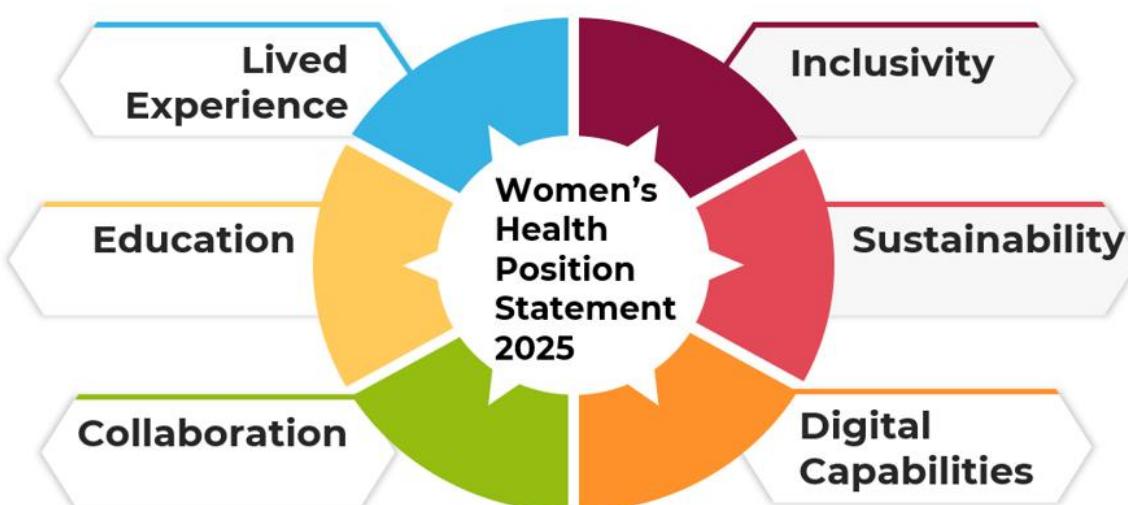
Details of this study can be found in Appendix 1.

“The consensus from our members is when pharmacists are involved in the process, the experience is far better”
Jacqui Dillon founder of Menopause Warriors.

RPS has engaged extensively with women's health pharmacists across multiple sectors and multi-disciplinary clinical experts involved in drafting and developing policy. We have also collaborated with third-sector charities that champion women's health to understand the barriers and challenges in accessing equitable and inclusive healthcare.

This position statement adopts a **principles-based approach**. Recognising the breadth and complexity of health conditions affecting women, it intentionally avoids a condition-specific focus. Instead, it offers a **holistic and overarching perspective** on the potential contributions pharmacists can make to delivering comprehensive women's health care.

Underpinning Strategic Themes



Key Recommendations

- 1. Patient Engagement**
- 2. Collaboration**
- 3. Shared Patient Records**
- 4. Education**
- 5. Digital Healthcare/AI**
- 6. Interventions and Awareness**
- 7. Sustainability**

Recommendation 1 : Patient Engagement

Women should receive culturally informed and inclusive care from pharmacists who understand their individual needs and actively build trusted patient partnerships that lead to improved health outcomes.

Establishing and building strong relationships with patients creates trust and confidence in pharmacists. Improved understanding of what matters to women and insight into inclusivity, health inequalities, cultural awareness and barriers to excellent care, strengthens communication and improves health outcomes for women.

Pharmacists should be aware that in some cultures and languages, there may be no direct word for menopause , menstruation or female anatomy. This linguistic gap can contribute to misunderstanding, stigma, and reduced access to appropriate care. Alternative ways to describe symptoms and experiences should be sought, especially when working with patients from diverse backgrounds.

By recognising and responding to these communication barriers, pharmacists can foster trust, improve health literacy, and ensure equitable access to care for all women.

By taking time to listen and establish supportive care connections, pharmacists can identify best practices, recognise areas of concern, and highlight gaps in women's health services that warrant development and improvement.

Creating an environment where women feel heard, encourages open conversations about medications and treatment options, empowering women to make informed choices about managing their current and future health.

Recommendation 2 : Collaboration

Pharmacists should be included at every stage of women's healthcare, using their expertise in medicines and patient care to shape policy, redesign systems, and improve services.

Pharmacist representation and visibility on working groups, committees, and panels advising on women's health is essential to shaping the future development and structure of women's health services.

Seeking out and capitalising on opportunities to network and engage with professional health contacts increases awareness of proposed projects, pilot studies and collaborative opportunities.

Establishing strong relationships with third sector representatives also enhances understanding of existing and emerging barriers, supporting the delivery of high-quality and equitable health services for women.

Pharmacists should have protected learning time to support development and knowledge of advancements in Women's Health. This will promote confident engagement with wider multiprofessional teams in an advisory and expert capacity.

Recommendation 3 : Shared Patient Records

All pharmacists should have access to a shared patient record to enable them to prescribe accurately and provide safe treatment and advice for women (as well as other patients).

RPS continues to advocate for consistent and timely access to shared patient records across all pharmacy sectors in the UK. This access is essential to delivering safer integrated care and enhancing prescribing safety.

As the role of pharmacists evolves — with all pharmacists expected to qualify as prescribers by 2026 — equitable access to shared records will become even more critical. However, current access levels remain inconsistent across the UK, and work is ongoing to expand and standardise this vital capability.

In **Scotland**, progress is underway following a vote by MSPs to support development of an integrated digital patient care record. This will enable secure and efficient data sharing between social services and health care providers ensuring safe and seamless care.

The Welsh Government has tasked **Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW)** with creating a National Target Architecture to enable integrated, patient-centred care through better data sharing. A Shared Medicines Record will be a core element of this future system. **NHS England** is working with Pharmacy First IT suppliers to add GP Connect Access Record: Structured functionality. This will provide pharmacists with real-time, read-only access to key parts of a patient's GP record (medications, observations, investigations) directly within their systems.

These important initiatives align with the RPS objectives set out in the [Pharmacy 2030 Vision](#) calling for a single shared electronic patient record with read/ write access for all.

Recommendation 4 : Education

Pharmacists across all sectors must be supported by evidence-based education and training to strengthen prescribing confidence and delivery of consistent, high-quality women's health services.

Empowering pharmacists to confidently prescribe and deliver first-class women's health services must be supported by robust and responsive educational infrastructures. These should be developed and regularly reviewed by experts in women's health and aligned with current clinical guidelines and national government policies.

A broad range of e-learning modules, webinars, and educational programmes are available from a variety of sources to support pharmacists in developing their expertise across key areas of women's health, including bone health, lifestyle impact, menstrual care, cardiovascular disease, and perinatal mental health. Educational materials must address competency in approaching culturally sensitive conversations, incorporate appropriate and adapted education resources and address disparities in women's health. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society career curricula provide frameworks for pharmacist career progression with mapped learning outcomes.

Valuable resources explore current challenges and barriers in women's healthcare, spotlight emerging concerns and signpost to clinical experts and third sector organisations. They should provide practical, evidence-based guidance that can be embedded into pharmacy practice and shared directly with patients—for example, raising awareness of how heart disease presents differently in women and remains under-recognised.

Importantly, these learning opportunities can also support pharmacists in expanding their clinical roles in new and evolving areas of care, including pharmacogenomics, HPV vaccination programmes and the insertion of contraceptive implants—ensuring high-quality, accessible services that meet the specific needs of women across the UK.

Recommendation 5 : Digital Healthcare/AI

Developing pharmacists' awareness of digital health and AI strategies will help identify and prioritise data to support, shape and improve women's health.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents significant opportunities to transform how pharmacists and their team's work. Building a strong understanding of artificial intelligence is key to supporting the digital evolution of pharmacy practice. Detailed examples of AI applications in pharmacy can be found in the [RPS policy Artificial Intelligence in Pharmacy](#)

The emerging role of digital healthcare is pivotal in capturing and prioritising data, informing population health strategies and promoting preventative and proactive patient care.

Increasing awareness of these digital initiatives will help pharmacists identify opportunities for timely intervention and drive improvements in population health and overall well-being.

An example of this is the [CLOCS-1 study](#) which uses data from pharmacy purchases, captured through loyalty cards, to identify women managing symptoms that may indicate early signs of ovarian cancer. This innovative approach supports earlier detection and intervention, demonstrating how digital tools can enhance population health outcomes and inform targeted care.

Digital self-management tools—including health apps and digital health wallets—can further empower women to monitor and manage their health more effectively. Femtech, or female technology, encompasses digital products, services, and solutions designed specifically for women's health. Pharmacists play a vital role in this space, particularly in supporting medication access, patient education, and addressing health needs related to reproductive health, menstrual cycles, fertility, and menopause.

Embedding digital capabilities frameworks within pharmacy education and professional development, empowers pharmacists to develop skills while building confidence and awareness of advancements and evolving technologies. This in turn can lead to transformation of healthcare delivery through digital technology.

Additionally, integrating digital capabilities into pharmacy education and professional development, empowers pharmacists with the skills and confidence needed to navigate emerging technologies. This enhances patient care, improves operational efficiency, and supports data-driven decision-making. Ultimately, it accelerates the digital transformation of healthcare delivery and prepares pharmacists for evolving

roles in women's health. This is supported by the RPS [Digital Capabilities for the Pharmacy Workforce](#) position statement.

Recommendation 6 : Interventions and Awareness

Women's health should be championed across pharmacist training from undergraduate to postgraduate and embedded in all pharmacy sectors to promote and identify opportunities to integrate women's healthcare into existing pharmacy workstreams.

Women's health should be incorporated into pharmacist training, prescribing training and speciality- specific learning and prioritised alongside other clinical specialties to ensure high-quality care and greater representation of pharmacists in this field. In the UK, women make up approximately 50.75% of the population, yet the number of pharmacists specialising in women's health does not currently reflect this demographic.

Improved awareness will also help build a better understanding of pharmacists' role in women's healthcare among the public and other health professionals.

Feedback from the June 2025 Common Registration Assessment highlighted that trainee pharmacists are expected to deliver person-centred care in reproductive health and treatment options for managing menopause related symptoms.

At the Clinical Pharmacy Congress 2025, pharmacists on the Women's Health Panel—representing a broad range of sectors—showcased strong examples of how they identified opportunities within their scope of practice to embed women's health awareness and service delivery. These initiatives, spanning areas such as contraception and menopause care, demonstrated how small changes can have a significant impact on patient care.

Collaborating with peers and sharing best practices, pilot studies, training, and audit findings can also drive meaningful improvements by highlighting service gaps, informing solutions, and demonstrating the impact of change.

Further examples of integrating women's health into professional pharmacy practice are detailed in **Appendix 2 – Examples of Professional Practice**

Recommendation 7 : Sustainability

Pharmacists can promote sustainable healthcare and reduce ecological harm by adopting environmentally conscious approaches to women's health prescribing and treatment, while actively engaging patients in these efforts.

Medicines are one of the most common interventions in healthcare. Keeping up to date with advances in practice and prescribing with environmentally informed choices, will help the profession to play its part in climate action and sustainable healthcare.

Sustainable prescribing for women is an emerging priority in both clinical pharmacy practice and health policy. It refers to prescribing practices that are clinically effective, patient-centred, environmentally responsible, cost-conscious, and equitable across the life course. Becoming familiar with this approach allows for informed and shared decision making with patients.

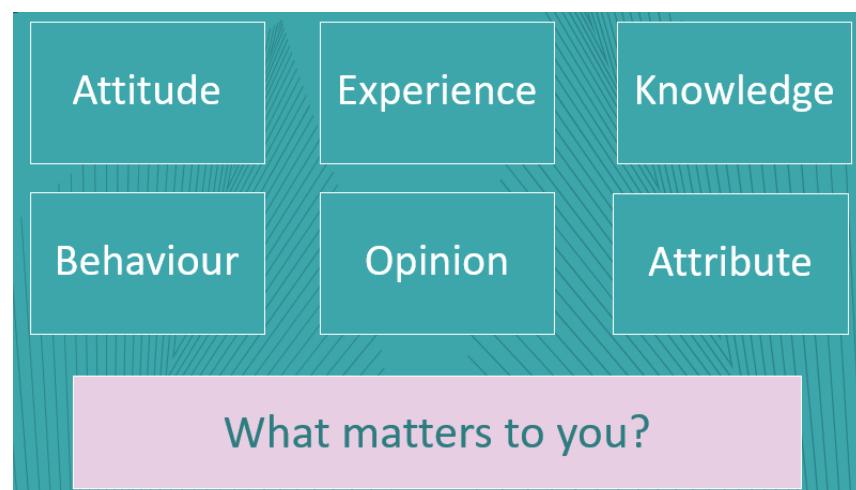
Pharmacists should familiarise themselves with current government environmental and health strategies and NHS green initiatives and integrate them into everyday practice. The [RPS Greener Pharmacy Guides and Toolkit](#) offer practical resources to support pharmacy teams in building a greener, more sustainable workplace culture.

Appendix 1.

Women's Health Study: A review of menopause service provision

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) recently conducted an online study to explore women's experiences when seeking menopause advice and information from pharmacists. The insights gained have been instrumental in helping shape our position statement, which outlines how pharmacists can deliver high-quality menopause care and support broader women's health service provision.

Focus areas of the study



Patient Quotes: What Matters To You?

“I want to be well informed; this will make me feel more comfortable and prepared for making decisions about my health”

“I wish I'd had an earlier intervention with my pharmacist to help me recognise and prepare for menopausal symptoms”

“Being able to access a community pharmacist who was knowledgeable and understanding, reassured me that peri-menopausal symptoms could be managed effectively”

“I think there should be more public awareness that pharmacists can have conversations about Women’s Health”

Survey analysis

The results overwhelmingly demonstrated women’s confidence in pharmacists to identify menopausal symptoms and raise awareness of them.

Over 84% of respondents said they would welcome education, information, and advice from pharmacists to help them make informed decisions about managing menopausal symptoms — including understanding post-menopausal risk factors and protecting their long-term health.

There was strong support for more pharmacists to specialise in women’s health, with many advocating for inclusive and equitable menopause clinics that offer prescribing services and a full exploration of all treatment options.

Case Study: Genitourinary Symptoms (UTI)

Only 45% of women surveyed, identified UTI as a menopausal symptom.

Community pharmacies currently provide treatment and advice for uncomplicated UTI’s via Patient Group Directions (PGD’s).

This supports expansion of existing **UTI PGDs** to include discussion, signposting, and advice on peri-menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms for women in specific demographics presenting with UTI symptoms.

With only **23%** of women surveyed feeling **informed and prepared** for menopause, including **menopause symptom checkers** could help women identify and recognise potential symptoms.

Case Study: Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)

This survey shows that women's self-perceived knowledge of menopausal symptoms often does not match informed knowledge, with only 56% of those surveyed having awareness of the increased risk of **CVD** associated with menopause. Menopause is an additional CVD risk factor in women who already face elevated baseline risks due to genetic, metabolic and cultural factors.

This highlights the importance of exploring opportunities in existing pharmacy workstreams to integrate discussion, signposting and advice of post-menopausal risks of CVD for women.

Promoting awareness of heart attack symptoms specific to women, monitoring blood pressure, weight and lifestyle factors can all positively impact patient outcomes.

Key Themes from the Study

1. Access and Availability

Pharmacists are ideally placed to provide accessible, accurate and consistent advice.

2. Medication and Treatment

Support for prescribing and clear advice to help women make informed treatment choices.

3. Privacy and Comfort

Private and accessible consultation spaces to provide support and clinical advice.

4. Awareness and Communication

Advertise women's health services and promote the normalisation of discussing all women's health topics.

5. Knowledge and Training

Support for pharmacy workforce menopause training including prescribing and symptom management options.

6. Support and Empathy

Women want to feel heard and supported through an empathetic approach and psychologically informed care

7. Inclusivity and Equity

Cultural awareness, digital exclusion and deprivation must be addressed in service design.

Appendix 2.

Examples of Professional Practice

How do I integrate Women's Health into my own practice?

Integrating Women's Health into your own pharmacy practice is both impactful and achievable. Here's a structured approach to help you get started and build momentum:

Initiating conversations and interventions

Create an inclusive, supportive, and open environment where women feel comfortable seeking advice and discussing concerns. Actively listen, encourage questions, be culturally sensitive and raise awareness about women's health issues that can result in health inequalities and associated symptoms.

Raising awareness, normalising and early detection

In some cases, women's self-perceived understanding of key areas of women's health does not align with evidence-based health knowledge.

As a result, many women may be unaware that their presenting symptoms could be linked to specific women's health conditions or life stages. This highlights the critical role pharmacists can play in helping to bridge this knowledge gap through education, early identification, and timely signposting or intervention.

Tailor Advice and Education

Providing evidence-based, personalised information on all available treatment options, including lifestyle modifications and non-hormonal alternatives in accessible formats.

Having awareness of and respect for cultural and individual preferences in every consultation, ensures care is tailored to each person's unique needs.

Stay Informed and Advocate

Staying up to date with evidence-based guidelines and the latest developments in women's health ensures best practice.

Engaging with professional networks to share knowledge, learn from peers, and stay connected generates discussion around current strategies and potential improvements.

Advocating within your team or organisation to drive more accessible, inclusive, equitable, and patient-centred care for all women.

Build and Promote Services

Introducing Women's Health clinics or anchoring specific services (e.g. menopause reviews, contraceptive advice, physical assessments) to existing workstreams.

Partnering with local GPs or specialists to explore referral pathways.

Have an understanding of, and signpost to local and national third sector organisations that can support patients with specific women's health issues, ensuring inclusion of underserved communities.

Consider offering point-of-care testing (e.g. blood pressure, cholesterol) to support risk factor management in post-menopausal women.

Examples from practice

Community Pharmacy

Menopausal symptoms, such as urinary tract infections (UTIs), migraines, insomnia, and bladder issues, are often first managed with over the counter (OTC) treatments obtained from community pharmacies.

Accessing targeted training for the pharmacy workforce to recognise and respond to these symptoms within specific patient demographics, raises awareness and supports earlier identification.

Incorporating menopause symptom checkers into UTI Patient Group Directions (PGDs), alongside clear and informative signposting, could significantly enhance the care experience for women and ensure they receive timely support.

GP Practice / Primary Care

Within your scope of prescribing practice and clinical services, are there opportunities to offer additional support to women that complements your existing provision?

Routine consultations can provide a valuable platform to discuss cardiovascular health, bone health, weight management, and lifestyle factors.

Integrating these conversations into everyday practice helps strengthen preventative care and empowers women with the knowledge and tools to proactively manage their long-term health.

Hospital Discharge Considerations

When discharging a patient, how much consideration is given to the impact of altering or discontinuing medications prescribed for women's health conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, or menopause?

Awareness of the clinical implications of these changes, alongside knowledge of specialist women's health organisations that offer accurate guidance and post-discharge support, can significantly enhance continuity of care and improve the overall patient journey.

Audit and Improvement Opportunities

Are there opportunities to audit existing prescribing practices in areas such as contraception, sexual health, menopause, and menstrual health and dysfunction? By engaging with individuals who have lived experience, pharmacists can play a vital role in identifying gaps, informing service improvements, and shaping more responsive care.

Sharing insights and findings encourages collaboration and supports peers in developing effective, evidence-based strategies within their own practice.

Small changes in practice can lead to meaningful impact.

By empowering the pharmacy workforce through supportive education and shared learning, creating opportunities for improvement through everyday interactions, and taking the time to understand the challenges faced by those with lived experience, pharmacists can play a vital role in enhancing the provision of women's health care.

Appendix 3.

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