

The Future of Pharmacy in a Sustainable NHS: Key Principles for Transformation and Growth

Summary

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Our Priorities

Priority 1: Establishing a valued and supported pharmacy workforce to improve patient care

The clinical and operational leadership provided by pharmacists and their teams during the pandemic has demonstrated the value to patient care from their unique and diverse skills. Pharmacists have played key roles in establishing and staffing field hospitals, ensuring vital medicines supply, preparing critical injectable medicines, and ensuring continuity of care in the community for patients with chronic diseases. They have also played important roles in research and have been instrumental in providing reliable information for preventing, detecting, treating and managing COVID-19. These skills must continue to be used, developed and recognised.

Throughout the pandemic we have campaigned for recognition of pharmacy as a key part of the healthcare workforce. We have made advances in a number of important areas including:

- Key worker status
- Pharmacy teams to be included in the life assurance scheme
- Access to health and wellbeing support
- Visa extensions for frontline pharmacists
- Pharmacy being routinely included in all NHS healthcare workforce initiatives.

Sustaining these developments for the profession will continue to be important.

PRINCIPLE 1:

Pharmacists and their teams must be able to work in a safe environment and be protected, particularly in times of public health emergencies.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patients continue to benefit from expert medicines support and care• Safe and efficient medicines supply is maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pharmacists can continue to work, providing crucial medicines advice to colleagues within the multidisciplinary team• Ensuring capacity in the health and social care system is not lost• Risk of virus transmission is reduced.

PRINCIPLE 2

Community pharmacy must be fully integrated into NHS services as a valued and recognised NHS provider to benefit patient care.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to improve patient safety in relation to medicines• Healthcare services offered by community pharmacies continue to be easily accessible to the public.• A smoother, streamlined patient journey across different health settings and sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase consistency in approach with other health care settings.• A valued and motivated pharmacy workforce that supports quality improvement and reduced workload on other parts of the system

PRINCIPLE 3

Protected time for pharmacists across all sectors will improve the quality of care to patients

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve patient safety as pharmacists have time to focus on crucial clinical work• Pharmacists and teams can use the time to prioritise workload and patient care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protected time will improve the health and wellbeing of the workforce• Pharmacists and their teams can have time to work on their professional development and in turn further develop enhanced service provision• Pharmacists can provide and participate in training and education as part of multi-disciplinary teams

PRINCIPLE 4

Pharmacy teams must be able to work in a positive working environment with access to appropriate mental health and wellbeing services

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the highest quality of care by supporting the health and wellbeing of pharmacists and their teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A better supported and valued workforce.• Less staff absences and improved levels of productivity, engagement, motivation to innovate and wellbeing

PRINCIPLE 5

Equality of opportunity must be assured across the pharmacy profession and in every sector of practice

PATIENT BENEFIT

- A workforce that reflects the diversity of the public that we serve
- The profession is representative of the communities they serve and can work within a full range of cultural contexts

NHS BENEFIT

- Tackle bias in recruitment, promotion and pay decisions
- A sense of belonging across the profession and the NHS where individuals can be themselves, enabling a thriving and successful workforce
- A profession that is representative of the diversity across all levels, bringing in diversity of thought and experience.

PRINCIPLE 6

Investment in foundation training must enable all pharmacists to qualify as independent prescribers and leadership opportunities must be embedded throughout the career pathway.

PATIENT BENEFIT

- Pharmacist involvement in multi-disciplinary teams will improve patient care and safety
- Quicker access to the medicines they require to manage their condition or symptoms
- Structured training will ensure standards are maintained in all settings across Great Britain

NHS BENEFIT

- Pharmacists to support multi-disciplinary teamwork working across all care settings
- Increase capacity and access to pharmaceutical expertise
- Increased responsiveness to patient needs and reducing waiting time

Priority 2: Enabling an integrated and connected pharmacy workforce to enhance patient care

COVID-19 has highlighted the advantages of technology in increasing patient access to timely, safe and effective pharmaceutical care. Digital health care solutions have become more critical to the management of demand, meeting patient need, and offering choice and safety for patients.

However, realising the benefits of these digital advancements requires better integration and interoperability across healthcare settings to:

- Support better patient outcomes by avoiding duplication
- Ensure up to date information is available
- Streamline patient journeys.

PRINCIPLE 7

Digital infrastructure and processes available to pharmacists throughout the pandemic should be accelerated, improved and built upon.

PATIENT BENEFIT

- Electronic ordering systems make it more convenient for patients to order their medications
- Improved patient journey and safety

NHS BENEFIT

- More efficient prescribing systems
- Decrease carbon footprint
- Safer and more efficient transfer between care settings

PRINCIPLE 8

Pharmacists in all care settings must have read and write access to a full and integrated electronic patient record

PRINCIPLE 9

Referral pathways must be put in place to ensure critical information can flow to and from all pharmacy settings

PATIENT BENEFIT

- Patients can fully benefit from interactions with community pharmacists
- People don't have to repeat information
- Information the pharmacist is using to make decisions is comprehensive, accurate and up to date ensuring safer care

NHS BENEFIT

- Health professionals across care settings can make more informed clinical decisions based on up to date and comprehensive patient information

PRINCIPLE 10

Pharmacists in all care settings must have access to virtual consultation tools and equipment.

PATIENT BENEFIT

- Increase patient access to pharmacist expertise. This is especially beneficial for those shielding / isolating, those who live in remote locations or those who are unable to get time away from work/family commitments.
- Overall, it reduces the need to travel to appointments reducing carbon footprint
- Empowers people

NHS BENEFIT

- Enables pharmacists and their teams to give access to care for those who are housebound or vulnerable for a specific reason (e.g. shielding or isolating)
- Provides additional capacity

PRINCIPLE 11

A universal model of consent for the delivery of pharmacy services must be created and implemented.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Patients only have to provide consent once rather than signing for each service provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides more effective and responsive servicesReduces administrative burden enabling clinicians to spend more time on patient care

Priority 3: Empowering the pharmacy profession to transform patient care

Pharmacy has collaborated with other healthcare professionals to better support patient care. Lessons must be learned from COVID-19 to ensure patients benefit from more innovative and efficient ways of working across the NHS. It has also been an opportunity to challenge traditional bureaucratic issues that have held back progress for pharmacy.

PRINCIPLE 12

All patient-facing pharmacists must be supported to become independent prescribers.

PRINCIPLE 13

The infrastructure must be established to support and facilitate the use of independent prescribers in all care settings.

PRINCIPLE 14

Ongoing support must be available to all independent prescribers including peer reviews and mentorship.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased access to prescribers closer to home who can support their care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve access to prescribing servicesMake the most of pharmacist expertise to deliver patient care and provide better outcomes from medicines

PRINCIPLE 15

Changes in medicines legislation must empower pharmacists to use their professional judgment to improve patient care.

PATIENT BENEFIT	BENEFIT TO NHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Patients are more readily available to access appropriate treatment, when a medicine as prescribed is unavailable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduces requirement for Serious Shortage Protocols which are time consuming.Better flow within system and reduces burden on prescribers

PRINCIPLE 16

Pharmacists and their teams must be enabled to contribute to solutions for reducing health inequalities – including tailored communications to local populations.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">People have local access to professional health care and advice tailored to their needs which should result in healthier populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduce health inequalities in the system by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Earlier identification and treatment of high-risk conditionsBetter public health and prevention reducing pressure on other parts of the system

PRINCIPLE 17

The community pharmacy network must be fully utilised when providing vaccination and testing services whilst ensuring it is a safe environment to do so.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People have access to professional health care and advice tailored to their needs• Accessible care, close to home, sometimes less intimidating than other health care settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce health inequalities in the system• Access to hard to reach communities and individuals

PRINCIPLE 18

Opportunities and support must be assured for practising pharmacists to participate in research to demonstrate value in existing services and products and lead future developments.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patient care is improved as pharmacy roles and services are evaluated to demonstrate this	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation of services will increase quality and ensure better value for money• Improves links between academia and the NHS

PRINCIPLE 19

Pharmacy teams must be fully integrated and utilised across primary and secondary care to support a seamless patient journey:

- Mobilise and utilise the whole of the pharmacy workforce, ensuring clinical expertise is used across the system
- Develop a national structure and strategy to increase the number and accessibility of consultant pharmacists
- Enable outpatient prescriptions to be accessed at the patient's community pharmacy of choice for supply to the patient.

PATIENT BENEFIT	NHS BENEFIT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More integrated care with increased patient access to pharmacist expertise• Care is provided closer to home• There is handover of care between secondary and primary care settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A flexible and adaptable workforce, able to respond to surges in demand during a pandemic, which maximises clinical expertise across settings• Efficiencies are realised across the system• Patients receive better, and more joined up, care• Improve medicines optimisation across the system

Our commitments

The RPS is committed to improving patient outcomes by ensuring the best use of medicines and excellent pharmaceutical care.

We are committed to:

- Taking positive action to call for change, to collaborate with governments, the NHS, employers, patient organisations and other key stakeholders to move pharmacy forward with purpose and pace
- Putting pharmacy at the forefront of healthcare to enhance patient care
- Providing and enabling the leadership and advocacy needed to put pharmacy in the best place to contribute to a sustainable, modern and efficient NHS for patients
- Advocating for the safety and protection of the profession
- Implementing the [RPS I&D strategy](#)
- Showcasing the varied roles of pharmacists and the impact these have on improving patient care, reducing health inequalities and the development of effective medicines
- Supporting pharmacists in their careers, advocating for education reforms and the development of training to ensure the profession continues to adapt to the needs of the health service.

Throughout the pandemic we have advocated to make sure pharmacy is supported to work safely and provide effective patient care. Our priorities for the profession were moulded and continually revised in response to the fast-moving situation. We acted and delivered for the profession on a wide range of issues such as Personal Protective Equipment, testing, risk assessments and preventing aggression and violence. These issues remain important and we will continue to commit to them.



To provide accessible healthcare

Throughout the UK, community pharmacies are the most accessible of all primary care contracted health care services. They provide patients with quick access to healthcare advice and support from a health professional. They are a particularly valuable resource in rural areas where the nearest GP surgery may be miles away and in deprived areas as a means of reducing inequalities in health and reversing the inverse care law.



Improving clinical outcomes for patients

As the experts in medicines and their effect on the body, pharmacists can support patients to get the most benefit from their medicines. Using their unique skills and knowledge, pharmacists ensure that medicines interact with each other effectively and safely, tailor doses appropriately and, in some instances, prescribe new medicines and stop existing medicines that are of no further benefit to the patient.



Ensuring value for money from medicines

With their unique knowledge of medicines, pharmacists are a vital asset to ensure that the annual investment in medicines is spent wisely and in a cost-effective manner. They do this by supporting appropriate prescribing and working with patients to deprescribe inappropriate and ineffective medicines.

The critical role of Pharmacists



To build capacity in primary care

Pharmacists are well placed to increase access to care for patients in primary care and community settings by taking an increased role in managing common ailments, acute conditions and long-term conditions. This can enable GPs more time and capacity for longer appointments and to focus on diagnoses and the management of more complex patients.



Reducing avoidable harm

When used incorrectly medicines can cause significant harm to patients. Inappropriate medicine use also introduces unforeseen challenges such as unplanned and emergency hospital admissions as the result of adverse drug reactions. Ensuring that patients and health professionals have access to pharmacists and their expert medicines knowledge is paramount to reducing these risks.

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