

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you as community pharmacy contractors to let you know the desperate situation we face at the front line of the NHS.

Your ambition to reform the NHS to bring care closer to communities is what we have devoted our careers and our lives to achieving. Our pharmacies are in high streets, in villages, in communities and collectively we see millions of patients – your voters – every day.

Our pharmacies remain in a perilous position despite the funding uplift you were able to secure in April 2025. We understand that the public finances are difficult.

A recent poll found that two thirds of pharmacies in England operated at a loss last year. That is incredibly serious.

That means that in reality two thirds of pharmacies are at real risk of imminent closure, jeopardising access to medicines our patients need and blowing an enormous hole in the 10 Year Plan before it has even begun.

Sadly we know that closures have already disproportionately affected patients in deprived communities with high health needs and those in isolated rural communities, people that really need the services we provide.

This cannot go on.

It is important that you understand that we face the reality of underfunding in a real and very brutal way. We are facing a cliff edge of cost rises - many imposed directly by Government. But without adequate NHS funding pharmacies close, our patients suffer.

The review of pharmacy finances, commissioned by your NHS England team, shows that there is still a huge gap – over £2bn - between NHS pharmacy funding and the economic cost of us running a pharmacy. Lives depend on our service.

Our pharmacies are routinely subsidising NHS prescriptions – despite our work to save the NHS billions by driving down medicine prices. That is simply not right.

Our teams are at breaking point. And too many of us are left taking out loans, maximising overdrafts and raiding pensions that we have spent our working lives building to keep our pharmacies afloat when we should be investing in the community healthcare you want to see.

It does not have to be like this.

As professionals who have dedicated our lives to bringing care into the community we have a shared ambition for our healthcare system.

We do not want to make the agonising decisions about whether the pharmacy can stay open or what services to cut in April. Instead, we want to look to a more sustainable future, delivering more and taking pressure away from the wider NHS family.

The future of our sector is in your hands. The Government has made a step in the right direction which your Ministers agreed was not enough. Your team said they would work to stabilise our funding so we can deliver for the NHS. We're asking you to keep your promise.

SIGNED BY COMMUNITY PHARMACY OWNERS:

Olivier Picard, Chair of the National Pharmacy Association, Owner Newdays Pharmacy, Berkshire