

# Government response: An independent local pharmacy campaign

On 20 October 2016, the government announced plans to modernise community pharmacies, improve service quality and relieve pressure on other parts of the NHS.

The government continues to recognise and value the importance of the services that community pharmacies provide.

The Department of Health and Social Care has encouraged greater use of community pharmacy by working to integrate pharmaceutical services with the rest of the NHS. The [Stay Well This Winter](#) campaign continues to advocate 'pharmacy first', and the [Healthy Living Pharmacy](#) framework supports community pharmacies to provide a range of services to help people stay healthy in the community.

Funding of £2.69 billion in 2016 to 2017 and £2.59 billion in 2017 to 2018 was announced in 2016. This represents a 4% reduction in funding in 2016 to 2017 and a further 3.4% in 2017 to 2018, which makes an important contribution to the sum of £22 billion of NHS efficiency savings set out in NHS England's [Five Year Forward View](#).

The reforms also introduced the following benefits:

- Protected access for patients through the introduction of the Pharmacy Access Scheme in areas where there are fewer pharmacies and higher health needs. Pharmacies in the scheme have been protected from the full effect of the funding reductions so that patients can continue to access the services they need.
- A simplified and more modern payment structure, phasing out the existing establishment payment, which is a fixed payment just for being there, and in doing so allowing more efficient allocation of NHS resources.
- Steps to integrate community pharmacy into urgent care pathways, including for those who need urgent repeat prescriptions and treatment for minor ailments. Patients needing urgent repeat prescription medicines are referred from NHS 111 to community pharmacies, rather than to the GP out-of-hours service. Community pharmacy has also again been commissioned to provide seasonal flu vaccinations.

There are over 11,600 community pharmacies dispensing NHS prescriptions in England. This is 1,500 more than there were 10 years ago. 88% of the population are within a 20-minute walk of a community pharmacy.

Pharmacies will continue to be trusted partners in a world-class NHS.