



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Presgripsiwn Newydd A New Prescription



The future of community pharmacy in Wales
December 2021

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Foreword

Community pharmacies play a vital role in communities in every part of Wales. As providers of NHS services, they contribute directly to improving the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales, both by ensuring they get the medicines they need to keep themselves well and by providing an alternative to other NHS services for a range of health and advice needs. The accessibility of Wales' more than 700 community pharmacies, providing care when and where people need it, often without appointment, takes pressure off other parts of the NHS and creates time for other services to deliver the care only they can provide.

The role of community pharmacy has changed significantly in the last ten years. Whilst the vital role pharmacies play in ensuring people's prescribed medicines are dispensed safely has continued, the contribution pharmacists make to improving health through delivering clinical services is helping to change the way people use the NHS, by improving access to the most appropriate services for their needs. Every month, many thousands of people now routinely access their local pharmacy for advice and treatment for a range of common minor ailments, for supplies of their prescription medication in an emergency, or to access contraception. One in ten NHS seasonal influenza vaccinations are now provided by pharmacies and pharmacies have played an important role in delivering our hugely successful COVID-19 vaccination programme particularly in our most rural areas.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Wales' community pharmacy network has played a significant role in supporting millions of people, whilst also helping to keep pressure off GP practices, hospitals and other public services during what has been a critical time. Our experiences and the lessons learnt during the pandemic have helped us to further develop the role of community pharmacies. The community pharmacy sector has responded to the challenge and embraced our ambition for a reimagined community pharmacy service. It is now time to recognise and reward pharmacies that understand, share, and can deliver our longer-term ambition.

From April 2022 community pharmacy in Wales will adopt a new contractual approach, a *new prescription* which builds on the significant progress we have already made. The new contract provides for a collaborative, innovative and progressive approach to the delivery of pharmaceutical care through which we maximise the impact of community pharmacy teams to meet the needs of the NHS and people in Wales now and for future generations.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan MS
Minister for Health
and Social Services

Introduction

Pharmacies at the heart of our communities

Dispensing medicines safely and efficiently has been the mainstay of NHS community pharmacy practice for well over 70 years. Since its formation in 1948, community pharmacies have supported the NHS to ensure people can access the medicines they need, when they need them.

In addition to their role in providing NHS services, a strong community pharmacy sector brings wider benefits to public health. Pharmacies are community assets, sources of social capital and economic drivers on our high streets, helping support and stimulate the local economy, creating local employment opportunities and encouraging footfall into other businesses. Pharmacies are a critical part of Wales' foundational economy, helping to create and sustain vibrant local communities.



Progress under the current contractual framework

Legislative and funding changes made in 2005, when contractual arrangements for community pharmacies were last reformed, created the platform for an increasing range of clinical services to be provided by pharmacies. Since those reforms, and in particular in the last 10 years, there has been a shift in the expectations of the NHS, the public and individual pharmacy professionals as to the role community pharmacies can play in improving health and wellbeing with a much greater focus on the provision of clinical services alongside the traditional role in supplying medicines.

Since 2011, the availability of community pharmacy clinical services has been steadily increasing. The majority of community pharmacies in Wales now routinely provide a range of clinical services including services that:

- Provide timely access to advice and treatment for a range of urgent care needs, taking pressure of other parts of the NHS;
- Help protect the health of the population through increasing vaccination rates and reducing the prevalence of high risk health behaviours; and
- Support the wider NHS by facilitating safe discharge from hospital and reducing the incidence of medicines-related readmissions.

The good progress made in recent years has been underpinned by improvements in our approach at a national level, specifically:

- Much stronger collaboration between health boards in the development of innovative clinical services supported by national service specifications and a national clinical service remuneration structure;
- The development of the *Choose Pharmacy* IT system by Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) to support clinical service delivery by providing access to shared patient information and reducing administrative burden; and
- The implementation of National Enhanced Service Accreditation arrangements by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) which ensure the competence of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians delivering additional clinical services allowing them to work anywhere in Wales, without the need for accreditation in each health board.

A need and commitment to reform

Community pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals, passionate about providing high quality services to their patients and the communities they serve. The changing expectations of the NHS and people in Wales mean we must go further to realise the potential community pharmacists have to play a greater role in clinical service delivery and improving health and wellbeing.



In October 2016, in response to cuts to community pharmacy funding in England, Ministers confirmed their intent to see continued investment in the community pharmacy sector in Wales but made future investment conditional on delivering new arrangements for community pharmacies which would amongst other things provide for a greater range of clinically focused services being available from pharmacies.

Since that time the Welsh Government, health boards and Community Pharmacy Wales (CPW) have been working to agree reforms to contractual arrangements for community pharmacies, to deliver Ministers' aspiration for a community pharmacy service able to meet the needs of citizens in Wales, now and in the future.

Recognising the good progress made early in negotiations, in March 2020, the Minister for Health and Social Services announced a multi-year agreement designed to enable community pharmacies to continue to meet the needs of people in Wales. The agreement built on the significant progress which had already been made in creating truly clinical community pharmacies, meeting

people's and the NHS' needs as an integral part of a strong primary care landscape. Providing additional funding of £18.3m for pharmacies over the three-year period, with overall funding for the sector set to increase by £8.6m per year by 2022–23, the agreement locked in the continuation of reforms to ensure community pharmacy services meet the needs of people in Wales by increasing funding for clinical service delivery by pharmacies, with phased reductions in the proportion of income associated with dispensing prescriptions.

The impact of COVID-19

During the first weeks and months of the COVID-19 pandemic, community pharmacies experienced significantly increased demand for their services, in particular through increased prescription volumes and requests for delivery of prescriptions. Changes to ways of working, linked to increased demand and measures required to limit transmission

of COVID-19, resulted in pharmacies incurring significant additional costs in the delivery of NHS services. In recognition of increasing costs, additional funding of £9.1m was made available to community pharmacies in 2019–20.

The pandemic has however accelerated the pace of innovation in parts of the sector, for example through increased use of video consulting and automation in the dispensing process. Despite the challenges, the pandemic has highlighted the vital role of community pharmacies and has served as a reminder of the high value people place on them as an accessible and trusted source of health advice in the community.

The contractual changes described in this document secure the long term sustainability of the community pharmacy in Wales, ensuring we fully utilise the expertise of community pharmacy professionals to help meet the current and future challenges faced by the NHS.



Where we are now

There are currently 713 community pharmacies located on high streets, in shopping centres, supermarkets, and co-located with GP practices across every part of Wales. In 2019–20, these pharmacies:

- Dispensed over 75m prescriptions for medicines needed to treat acute and long term conditions;
- Provided treatment and advice through just under 75,000 consultations in Wales' NHS common ailment service where 80% of patients would have otherwise needed to visit their GP;
- Undertook nearly 24,000 consultations for emergency contraception, with over two thirds of consultations taking place within 24 hours of unprotected sexual intercourse;
- Administered more than 90,000 seasonal influenza vaccinations to people at the highest risk of complications from influenza; and
- Supported over 12,000 discharges from hospital making sure people got the

medicines they needed when they returned home after admission to hospital.

In addition:

- The *Choose Pharmacy* IT system is available in 98% of community pharmacies;
- Access to the Welsh GP record is available to pharmacists providing the emergency medicine supply, seasonal influenza vaccination and independent prescribing services;
- Electronic summaries of pharmacy service consultations are being shared with GP practices for the common ailment, emergency medicine supply, and seasonal influenza vaccination services;
- 1,539 pharmacists and 175 pharmacy technicians have completed the *National Enhanced Service Accreditation* process; and
- 146 pharmacists have accessed support from Health Education and Improvement Wales to train as independent prescribers.



Where we are heading

In 2018, the Welsh Government published its long-term vision for health and social care *A Healthier Wales*¹. The pharmacy profession's response, *Pharmacy: Delivering a Healthier Wales*², provided a consensus view from the whole profession in Wales as to how pharmacy services should be developed by 2030. Ensuring the knowledge and skills of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and wider pharmacy teams, can be utilised to make more meaningful contributions to improve the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Wales.

Pharmacy: Delivering a Healthier Wales outlines a number of specific goals in relation to community pharmacy specifically:

- Ensuring medicines are supplied through pharmacy in way that meets the changing needs of citizens, whilst increasing access to regular advice and expertise;
- Maximising the use of community pharmacies to improve access for patients and to take pressure off other parts of the NHS;
- Increasing the use of the skills of pharmacist prescribers in community pharmacy;
- More consistently providing NHS clinical services in pharmacies transforming every pharmacy into a local health and wellbeing hub; and
- Integrating community pharmacy more closely with the NHS in particular by encouraging collaborative work within primary care clusters.

To meet these goals, the progress made already to transform the role of community pharmacies across Wales must continue and accelerate.



1. <https://gov.wales/healthier-wales-long-term-plan-health-and-social-care>

2. <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/all-our-campaigns/pharmacy-delivering-a-healthier-wales/>

What is important to us

Building on community pharmacy's strengths

Community pharmacies play a vital role in communities in every part of Wales. In addition to their role in providing NHS services, a strong community pharmacy sector brings wider benefits to public health. As community assets, pharmacies play an important role in Wales' foundational economy, helping to create and sustain vibrant local communities.

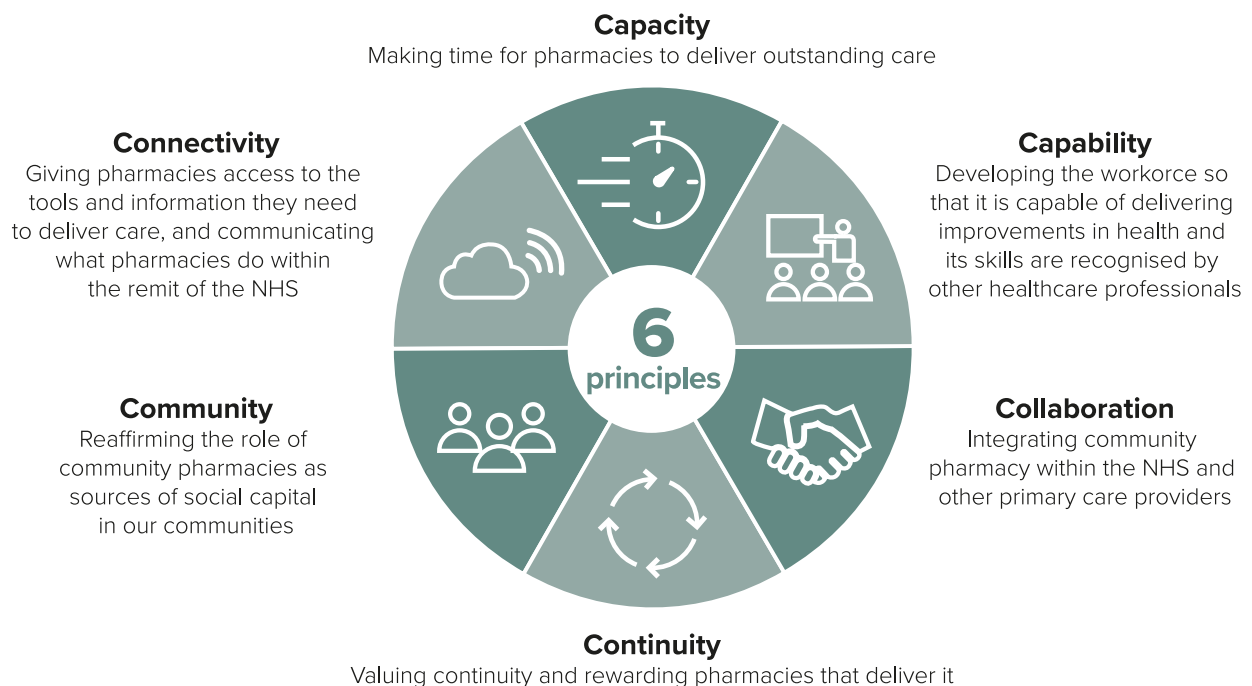


Meeting changing expectations

The role of community pharmacies needs to evolve to continue to meet individuals' and society's changing needs and expectations. This will necessitate new ways of working, in particular through more effective use of digital technology and automation. However, as the sector's role changes we must ensure the fundamental strengths of community pharmacy, providing ready access to trusted healthcare professionals, when and where people need it, are retained; a service that meets today's and tomorrow's needs underpinned by traditional values.

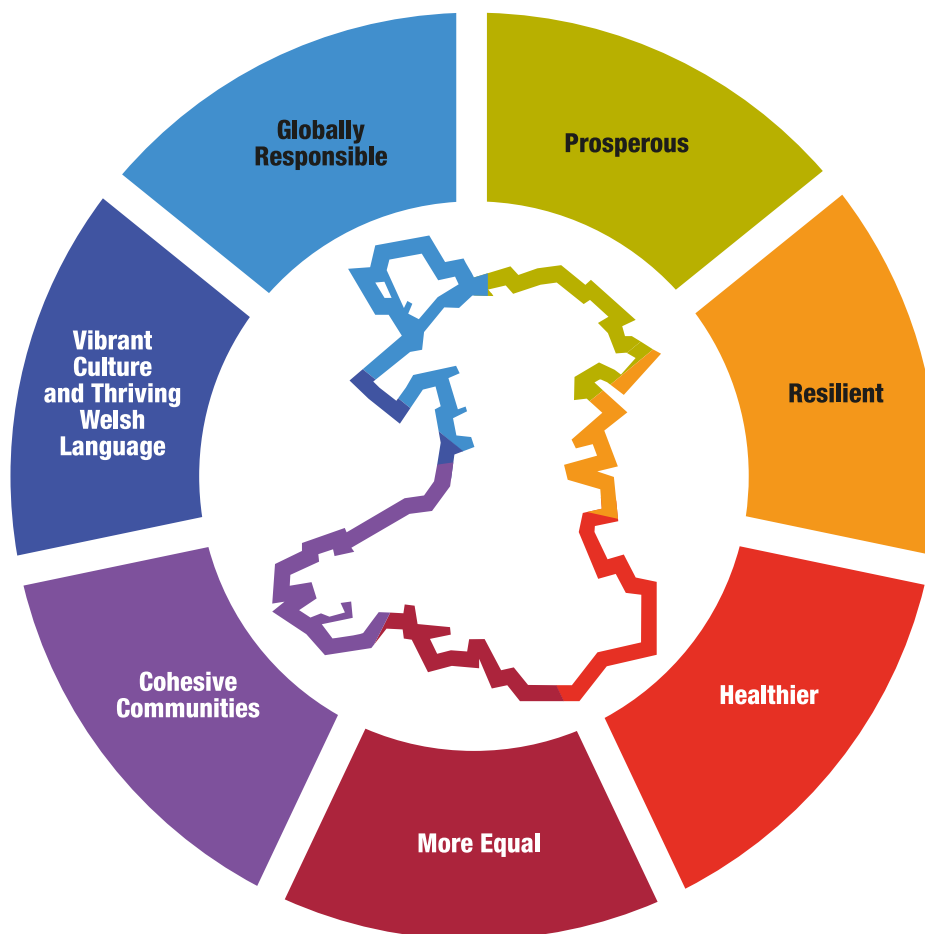
To make this a reality, the future of community pharmacy will be shaped around six principles (figure one):

Figure one: The six principles shaping the future of community pharmacy in Wales



Doing more to improve Wales' environment, economy, society and culture

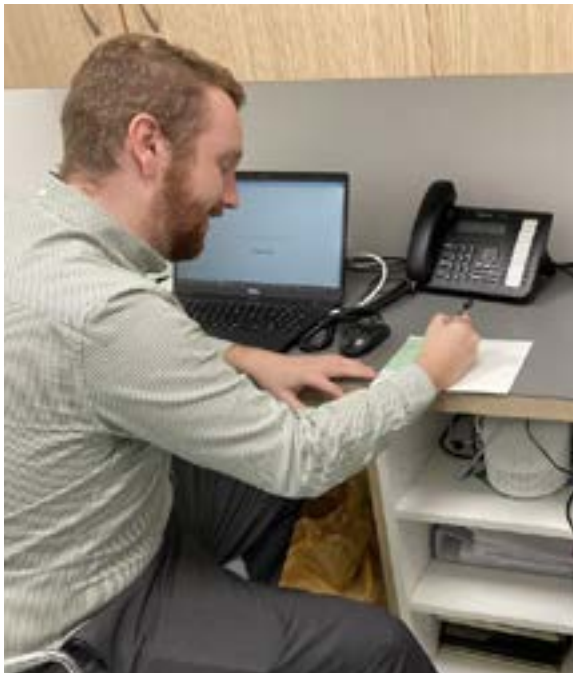
The *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015*³ places certain duties on public bodies in Wales to address the challenges such as climate change and health inequalities, we face now and in the future. Community pharmacies have an important role to play in improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The role pharmacies might play in each of these areas, and beyond the changes expressly described and funded in this agreement, is yet to be defined and will be the subject of future negotiations.



3. <https://gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales>

Contractual Reform – What we have agreed

The agreement between the Welsh Government, the NHS and Community Pharmacy Wales describes our joint vision for how community pharmacy should be transformed to meet the needs of the people of Wales. The agreement contains wide-ranging reforms to the community pharmacy contractual framework (CPCF), committing to clinical service delivery, workforce development, improving quality and safety and integrating community pharmacy more closely within primary care clusters. Importantly the changes are underpinned by significant reform of CPCF funding to incentivise and reward pharmacies that do more of the things the NHS needs.



The agreement is a clear commitment to reimagining the role community pharmacies play in Wales through clear, stepwise changes that ensures the long-term sustainability of the sector. The agreement comprises a wide range of reforms under the following four themes:

- 1 Expanding the clinical role of community pharmacists;
- 2 A workforce with the skills needed to deliver outstanding pharmaceutical care;
- 3 A commitment to quality, collaboration and integration within primary care; and
- 4 Valuing the contribution community pharmacies make to the NHS.

Expanding the clinical role of community pharmacists

A new consistently delivered clinical community pharmacy service

Community pharmacies should be the first point of contact for NHS care that would otherwise be provided by other less accessible or less appropriate NHS services, and people in Wales should be able to expect services available in one pharmacy to be reliably available in them all.

A new universally delivered clinical service will facilitate a move away from a transactional approach centred on individual services where patients have to negotiate the variation in local commissioning by health boards and provision by pharmacies. Creating a more consistent service offer, available at the vast majority of pharmacies in Wales, will build confidence, develop trust, change behaviour, and improve outcomes.

In order to improve the consistency of service commissioning by health boards and service delivery by pharmacies, from April 2022, four priority services will be brought into national commissioning.

The four priority services (the common ailment, emergency contraception, emergency medicine supply and seasonal influenza vaccination services) will be combined in a single national clinical community pharmacy service (CCPS). During 2022-23, we will extend CCPS to enable pharmacies to provide both bridging and quick start contraception.

All pharmacies will be able to provide the CCPS subject to meeting specified standards in relation to premises and training. However, pharmacies will have to agree to provide all four (five) components of the CCPS or to opt out altogether (rather than the current arrangement that allows pharmacies to opt in or out of individual services). This will improve the continuity of access to these services and create a new universal minimum level of service that all pharmacies provide and further supports efforts to promote the appropriate use of NHS services.

Supporting innovative services to meet local needs

Community pharmacy clinical service funding will be increased both to meet the costs of the new CCPS and to support the continued development and commissioning of local services by health boards to meet local needs. In line with the changes made in 2017–18, this funding will continue to be ring-fenced with the balance of funding for CCPS available to health boards.

Where appropriate, locally commissioned services will be considered for inclusion in CCPS.



Using the skills of pharmacist prescribers in community pharmacy

Since 2018–19 the CCPF has included funding to support the development of community pharmacy independent prescribing services by health boards. Based on experiences from the pilot sites in every health board, we have agreed to significantly accelerate the roll out of independent prescribing in community pharmacy.

From April 2022, any pharmacy will be enabled to provide a new national independent prescribing service subject to employing a suitably qualified and competent pharmacist independent prescriber. The nationally directed service will also build on the

long-standing common ailment and emergency contraception services by enabling prescribing for a range of extended minor illnesses not covered by the common ailment service, and for routine contraception in line with recommendations made in Public Health Wales' 2018 *Review of Sexual Health in Wales*⁴. The service will also allow health boards to agree other prescribing services to meet local needs.

A workforce with the skills needed to deliver outstanding pharmaceutical care

The wider availability of clinical services is dependent on pharmacists having the appropriate clinical skills to provide them, including independent prescribing. It will also depend on pharmacy technicians and the wider pharmacy workforce being available in sufficient numbers and with sufficient competence to take on roles previously undertaken by pharmacists.

The responsibility for workforce development will, in the main, be taken forward by HEIW. HEIW's workforce plans have been aligned with the CPCF reforms and include:

- A commitment to support at least 60 community pharmacists every year to complete independent prescribing training. This will include meeting the costs of Higher Educational Institution fees and financial support to meet the costs incurred by pharmacies in completing their training;
- Exploring the availability of "access to" courses to support widening access to the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) training route for pharmacy technicians;

- Providing access to pre-registration pharmacy technician training for community employers through the MA training route with access to bursaries for community pharmacy trainees in line with current demand for training;
- Ensuring community pharmacists are eligible for NHS funding for extended, advanced and higher level post-registration education, when this aligns to local and national pharmacy workforce priorities; and
- Evaluating the Welsh Government funded Protected Learning Time (PLT) pilot for community pharmacy professionals and making recommendations on the future of PLT for community pharmacy.

In addition to HEIW's plans for workforce development, a two-year incentive scheme has been agreed to encourage pharmacy contractors to realise the benefits of skill mix in community pharmacy. The incentive scheme, which will run in both 2022–23 and 2023–24, will provide financial incentives for recruitment and training of pharmacy technicians including developing the role of accredited checking pharmacy technicians.



4. www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/A%20Review%20of%20Sexual%20Health%20in%20Wales%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf

A commitment to quality, collaboration and integration within primary care

The integration and collaboration of community pharmacies within primary care clusters is vital to realising the potential of community pharmacy and transforming care pathways in the way necessary to achieve the vision set out in *Pharmacy: Delivering a Healthier Wales*.

Since 2018-19, the CPCF has included incentives for pharmacies to participate in collaborative working with other primary care providers, usually general practitioners, in key areas such as improving vaccination uptake, improving the quality of repeat prescribing, and reducing demand for GP appointments for people who can be managed in the pharmacy.

As part of the multi-year funding agreement reached earlier in 2021, we agreed to make funding available to appoint 60 primary care cluster community pharmacy leads (PCCCPLs) who would provide coordination and leadership for community pharmacies within each cluster. These posts have now been in place for six months and funding for the collaborative working scheme and PCCCPLs will continue as part of this CPCF agreement. To ensure the benefits of PCCCPL roles are realised, the Welsh Government will work with CPW to progress an evaluation of the first year after implementation to identify priorities for strengthening the role.

The Quality and Safety scheme included in the CPCF since 2018–19 will continue in broadly the same form. Changes to the scheme will be negotiated annually.



Valuing the contribution community pharmacies make to the NHS

The CPCF funding for 2022-23 has already been agreed at £154.2m, representing a 2% increase in funding on 2021-22. However, from April 2022, the redistribution of funding started in 2017-18, will be accelerated to support our aspirations for the wider availability of clinical services from all pharmacies.

The breakdown of funding changes from 2022-23 to 2024-25 are shown in table one. In summary, the main changes to the distribution of funding are as follows:

From January 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of fee changes will be made to clinical services to more appropriately reflect the value of those services to the NHS and the need for service income to meet costs previously met from dispensing income. These changes will be backdated to April 2021.
From April 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispensing fees will be capped at £80m per annum with overall funding associated with dispensing prescriptions reduced to £106.8m. Payments for repeat dispensing and IM&T allowances will cease and become obligations under the establishment payment. Establishment payments will be simplified with the current establishment payment linked to minimum dispensing volumes reduced, and the balance of funding returned to pharmacies providing the CCPS. Practice payments will be capped at £17.9m. Any increase in dispensing costs associated with hospital prescription items dispensed in community pharmacies will be excluded from the calculation of CPCF funding and met by the relevant health boards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for clinical services incorporated in CCPS or commissioned locally will increase to £15.0m. Funding for independent prescribing services will increase to £4.2m. Funding to maintain arrangements for patients shielding or self-isolating during COVID-19 will cease and the Medicine Use Review (MUR) service will be discontinued.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to £4.3m will be available to incentivise the recruitment and training of pharmacy technicians in community pharmacy. The transfer of £0.4m for the maintenance and development of Choose Pharmacy by Digital Health and Care Wales will become recurrent.
From April 2023 ⁵
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall funding associated with dispensing prescriptions reduced to, and maintained at, £99.2m per annum. The continuity payment will end and be incorporated in the element of the establishment payment available to those pharmacies providing the CCPS. Practice payments will be capped, and maintained at, £10.2m per annum.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for clinical services incorporated in CCPS or commissioned locally will increase to £16.0m. Funding for independent prescribing services will increase to £12.2m.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to £4.3m will be available to incentivise the recruitment and training of pharmacy technicians in community pharmacy.
From April 2024 ⁵
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for clinical services incorporated in CCPS or commissioned locally will increase to at least £18.0m. Funding for independent prescribing services will increase to at least £18.4m.

5. The actual funding will depend on agreement to the level of increase in overall CPCF funding.

Beyond 2022–23, future funding is yet to be agreed. However, as part of the agreement funding for CCPS, locally commissioned clinical services and independent prescribing will increase in line with inflationary growth in NHS pay; this will be reflected in increases to the overall level of CPCF funding.

Table: Summary of CPCF funding distribution changes

	2021/22	2022/23 ⁶	2023/24	2024/25
CPCF TOTAL	151.2	154.2	154.2 ⁷	154.2 ⁷
Professional fees	80	80	80	80
Establishment payments (Dispensing)	17.6	8.9	9	9
Establishment payments (PCCS)	0	8.9	13.3	13.3
Practice Payment	25.7	12.8	5.1	5.1
“Terms of Service”	0	5.1	5.1	5.1
Collaborative Working	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Quality & Safety	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6
Continuity	4.3	4.3	0	0
Primary Care Cluster Leads	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Choose Pharmacy Application	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Clinical services including PCCS	11.4	15	16	18
Independent Prescribing (IP) services	1	4	12	18.2
IP set-up	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
STTT consumables	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Arrangements for self-isolating patients ⁸	5.8	0	0	0
Workforce Enabler (technician funding)	0	4.3	4.3	0
Unallocated	0	5.4	3.9	0

6. End of current multi-year agreement

7. Funding in 2023/24 and 2024/25 is subject to inflationary growth in NHS pay the level of which is not yet known

8. Funding previously supported the Medicine Use Review (MUR) service

What else we are doing

Realising our ambition for community pharmacies in Wales will require continued support to reduce waste, transform and modernise practice, and increased awareness of the role of pharmacies in providing NHS services. To do that we will:

- Publish the previously commissioned review of dispensing volumes in Wales alongside a plan setting out how the review recommendations will be implemented.
- Build on the £450,000 investment made in community pharmacies since 2019–20 to improve the efficiency and quality of dispensing through more effective use of technology and automation, by offering targeted support for pharmacies.
- Continue to provide every pharmacy in Wales with the access to digital tools and information they need. This will include providing pharmacists and pharmacy technicians access to Microsoft 365, access to the National Video Conferencing Service (NVCS), widening access to the Welsh GP Record (WGPR), and ensuring e-summaries are available across all services supported by *Choose Pharmacy*.
- Ensure the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership routinely publishes clinical services' outcome data for every community pharmacy and primary care cluster.
- Commission a review of the current terms of service for pharmacy contractors, commencing in 2022–23, with a view to reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and administrative burden for community pharmacies.
- Work with DHCW to implement the recommendations of the ePrescribing review published in October 2021.
- Undertake work to establish whether there are further conditions that could be managed in community pharmacies, for example through extending the common ailment service, which would reduce demand on other parts of the NHS.
- Continue to promote the extended role of community pharmacies specifically and as part of wider work like *Help Us to Help You*⁹ that promotes more appropriate use of NHS services.



9. <https://www.facebook.com/welshgovernment/videos/help-us-help-you/2611345602489706/>

Conclusion

This agreement provides for a sustainable future for community pharmacies in Wales, a future that is increasingly clinically focused, with less emphasis on dispensing and more on providing advice and support for people to stay healthy.

The reforms provide a community pharmacy service that will meet the expectations newly registering

pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have and will increasingly expect as changes to the initial education and training of pharmacy professionals take shape. Importantly the reforms help meet the aspirations the NHS has for the sector to ensure community pharmacies can continue to play an important role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales.

