

Meeting the rural health challenge Pharmacy as a key lever for change

Key issues

- Pharmacists have a key and unique role to play in modernising the delivery of patient care in the rural areas of Wales. As the NHS expert in medicines they are a valuable community resource, seeing people who are generally fit and well and not in touch with any other health professional, and addressing the health and wellbeing needs of people with minor ailments and those living with chronic conditions.
- Working in our communities, within GP surgeries, LHBs, secondary and tertiary care they are well placed to deliver a range of clinical patient services, manage a safe and efficient medicines supply system and provide support on safe and effective prescribing to other healthcare professionals.
- With 25% more pharmacy outlets than GP practices in areas such as Powys and Ceredigion, it is clear that the local community pharmacy are well placed to deliver significant improvements in health care provision in rural areas across Wales.

Pharmacy as a lever for change in rural health

Four key areas need to be addressed to ensure that pharmacy can make a significant difference to rural health care in Wales:

- Utilising the Community Pharmacy Contractual Agreement
- Integrating pharmacists into multidisciplinary models of care
- Utilising the skills of the pharmacy workforce more appropriately
- Utilising community pharmacy premises as part of NHS hub and spoke services

Key lever for change	Benefits for patients and healthcare services	Recommendations
Utilising the Community Pharmacy Contractual Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Treating minor ailments and self-limiting conditions: Using the contract to ensure increasing numbers of minor ailments can be treated by community pharmacists would help reduce some of this workload for GPs while at the same time providing easier access for patients to minor ailment treatment in rural locations. ▪ Supporting the management of chronic conditions: community pharmacies can become involved in <i>patient education, medicines management, improving disease control, testing and monitoring support</i> as part of integrated patient care pathways. ▪ Routine diagnostic testing: Providing <i>routine</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage/incentivise greater partnership working between GPs and community pharmacists to ensure continuity of care and ease of access to services in local communities. ▪ Explore the opportunities of introducing schemes at local and national levels that build on the community pharmacy contractual agreement to provide a range of services across rural areas to improve patient access to services and reduce pressures on other areas of the health service

	<p><i>diagnostic testing</i> through the community pharmacy network in rural areas will improve patient access and reduce workload in GP practices and rural hospitals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy lifestyle support: Community pharmacies are able to provide improved support to patients in rural locations in making important lifestyle changes that will improve their health and well-being and reduce pressure on both health and social services support services. Examples of community pharmacy services include <i>vascular risk assessment, obesity management services and smoking cessation support.</i> 	
Integrating pharmacists into innovative models of multidisciplinary care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making full use of all health professionals available will help to improve access to a health professional for people living in rural areas. ▪ Ensuing appropriate mechanisms are in place (i.e. via IM&T) to exchange patient information in a secure way between health professionals will improve continuity of care for people living in rural areas and improve the efficiency of healthcare services. ▪ Providing care safely and in line with clinical governance arrangements as close to home as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The skills of health care professionals, including pharmacists, should be brought together in innovative models of multidisciplinary care to deliver care across rural areas ▪ Clear pathways of care should be developed including protocols for direct referral between health professionals across rural areas. ▪ Modern technologies should be utilised to allow patient information to be accessed by appropriate health care professionals across rural health areas to ensure effective continuity of care. ▪ Delivery models should be developed to utilise the specialist knowledge and clinical skills of hospital based pharmacists in managing conditions through therapeutic interventions in more accessible locations i.e. contracting community pharmacies to provide routine patient monitoring
Utilising the skills of the pharmacy workforce more appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recent changes to legislation permit pharmacists in both community and hospital settings to play an increasingly proactive role in the prescribing of medicines and their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore opportunities for developing innovative services utilising the skills of pharmacist prescribers across rural areas. ▪ Encourage multidisciplinary training to all healthcare

	<p>overall management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As a key part of a care pathway, pharmacist prescribing can improve the management of patient's conditions, ensure prompt access to care, and help reduce pressures on other parts of the health care system. 	<p>professionals to ensure improved partnership working across rural areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure service delivery takes a flexible approach to working, manpower and skill mix. ▪ Explore opportunities for reducing professional isolation encountered in a rural environment through access to a network of more specialist advice and expertise, decision making support tools and evidence based information. ▪ Ensure support is provided in innovative ways for continuing professional development for professionals working in rural areas. ▪ Consider incentives and/or work placement schemes to encourage greater retention of NHS pharmacists and other healthcare professionals in rural areas.
<p>Utilising community pharmacy premises as part of NHS hub and spoke services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilising community pharmacy premises as part of an overall estates strategy will help to reduce overlap and duplication in the delivery of innovative models of care in rural areas. ▪ Investment in community pharmacy premises could enable them to be used for peripatetic professional services i.e. to provide mobile screening facilities, sexual health clinics, physiotherapy. These premises could also be used for tele-health and tele-medicine purposes – linking to GP premises, community hospitals and other secondary care facilities ▪ Patients will be able to access more services in local community pharmacy premises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore opportunities for bringing currently disparate services together and promoting sharing of facilities. e.g. community hospitals, community pharmacies, social services. ▪ Encourage investment in community pharmacy premises to develop them as outlets for a range of professional services in line with overall strategic models of care for rural areas of Wales. ▪ Explore the opportunities of developing consultation kiosks in community pharmacies in rural areas which link to other support services such as NHS Direct, social care advice, consumer advice and access to patient support groups could also be delivered.

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