

25 FEB 2016



Department  
of Health

From the Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP  
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24 FEB 2016

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 27 January to George Freeman on behalf of one of your constituents about the Government's proposals to put pharmacy at the heart of the NHS and provide a better, more integrated, service for patients and the public.

The Government believes there is real potential for far greater use of community pharmacy and pharmacists in England in the prevention of ill health, support for healthy living, support for self-care for minor ailments and long-term conditions, medication reviews in care homes, and as part of more integrated local care models.

We need a clinically focused community pharmacy service that is better integrated with primary care and public health in line with the *Five Year Forward View*. This will help relieve the pressure on GPs and A&E departments, ensure better use of medicines and better patient outcomes, and contribute to delivering seven-day health and care services. The Department is consulting on how best to introduce a Pharmacy Integration Fund to help transform the way pharmacists and community pharmacy will operate in the NHS, bringing clear benefits to patients and the public.

Spending on health continues to grow, with a £10billion real terms increase in NHS funding in England between 2014/15 and 2020/21, of which £6billion will be delivered by the end of 2016/17. We want to focus spending on lifesaving treatments and cures and we expect to be spending up to an extra £2billion per year on new drugs by the end of 2020.

In the Spending Review, the Government re-affirmed the need for the NHS to deliver £22billion in efficiency savings by 2020/21, as set out in the *Five Year Forward View*. Community pharmacy is a core part of NHS primary care and has an important contribution to make as the NHS rises to these challenges. This will involve reductions in the amount of NHS funding for community pharmacies in England.

However, the sum will remain significant, with £2.63billion of funding for the sector in 2016/17 compared with £2.8billion in 2015/16.

The Government believes these efficiencies can be made within community pharmacy without compromising the quality of services or public access to them. In some parts of the country there may be more pharmacies than are necessary to maintain good access. Forty per cent of pharmacies are in clusters of three or more, meaning that two-fifths of pharmacies are within ten minutes walk of two or more other pharmacies. Our aim is to ensure that those community pharmacies upon which people depend continue to thrive, and we are consulting on the introduction of a Pharmacy Access Scheme, which will provide more NHS funds to certain pharmacies, considering factors such as location and the health needs of the local population.

We want to transform the system to deliver efficiency savings and ensure the model of community pharmacy reflects patient and public expectations and developments in technology. This is the time to embrace developments in technology to provide the best possible service. Prescription journeys are still too often slow and awkward. We want to promote the use of on-line, click and collect or home delivery models, to help patients to get their prescriptions in a way that fits into their lifestyle. This is about ensuring we have a modern, efficient community pharmacy sector offering patient choice and easier access and which is fit for the future as well as today.

The Government is in detailed discussions with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and will consult with the pharmacy sector and patient and public organisations over the coming months on how to deliver these savings, to achieve a new, modernised and integrated service. I would advise your constituent to feed in their views through the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee or through his trade association.

Further information about the proposals can be found on the Government's information and advice website at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) by entering 'putting community pharmacy at the heart of the NHS' into the search bar.

This includes the original open letter to the sector, published on 17 December, as well as additional information published during January, including a foreword from the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Dr Keith Ridge. I hope that your constituent will find the further detail provided in these publications helpful in setting out the Government's aims and objectives for community pharmacy, as well as our commitment to work collaboratively with the sector during the consultation period to ensure we deliver a final set of proposals that transforms community pharmacy to the benefit of patients and the public.



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I hope this reply is helpful.

*Yours  
A. B.*

**ALISTAIR BURT**