

Executive Summary

Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments (PNAs) are carried out to assess the current and future needs for pharmaceutical services in the local population. They ensure that community pharmacy services are provided in the right place and meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Every Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) has a statutory responsibility to conduct a PNA at least every three years. This PNA follows the 2022 version of the PNA. NHS England (NHSE) is required to use the finalised PNA to consider applications to open a new pharmacy, move an existing pharmacy or to commission additional services from a pharmacy. This responsibility has been delegated to Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) by NHSE.

There are hyperlinks throughout the text that link to the relevant section(s) within the main document, these are in [blue](#). Hover the cursor over the text and press Ctrl and click to follow the link.

The PNA covers opening times [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#), services delivered [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#), [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#) and accessibility in relation to disability, language needs, ethnicity, sexuality [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#), and rurality. The production of the PNA has involved:

- Analysis of data relating to pharmaceutical need and demand from wide and varied sources
- Consultation with members of the Cheshire East Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment Steering Group, which brought together representatives from key organisations across Cheshire East
- A public survey and incorporation of feedback regarding pharmacies as part of broader Healthwatch conversations [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#) and [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- A dispensing doctors survey [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- A community pharmacy contractors survey. (Section 3.4.1 & [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#))

Based on this PNA, current pharmaceutical provision in Cheshire East Borough is assessed as **adequate** in terms of location, opening hours, and pharmaceutical services offered to the population.

Through examination of the available information, the PNA has not identified current or anticipated future need for new NHS pharmaceutical service providers in Cheshire East

A public consultation took place from 31st March 2025 to 6th June 2025 to gather feedback regarding the draft PNA. All feedback has been reviewed and summarised

in appendix G in the final version of the PNA The final PNA 2025-2028 will be published by the 1st October 2025.

Updated population projections were released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the 24th of June 2025, after the 2025-2028 PNA public consultation. This new data has been incorporated and considered in a revised section **Error! Reference source not found.** of the final version of the PNA.

The Steering Group have examined this revised population information, together with all the consultation responses received. After careful consideration and seeking appropriate advice if required, they have **concluded that the original statement remains valid, that there is adequate provision when location, number and distribution of pharmacies providing essential and advance services during standard core hours to meet the needs of the Cheshire East population.**

1.1 Current provision

- There is currently an adequate level of community pharmacy provision in every major town in the Borough.
- There are currently 68 community pharmacies within Cheshire East. In the rural areas where a pharmacy would not be a viable business, there are six dispensing doctors that are able to dispense to qualifying patients. There are also two Distance Selling Pharmacies (DSPs), both located within the SMASH (Sandbach, Middlewich, Alsager, Scholar Green and Haslington) Care Community, but under their contract, they provide essential pharmaceutical services to anyone within England. **Error! Reference source not found.]**
- The detailed maps by care communities in Appendix D show that community pharmacies are largely located in the town centres, or close to GP surgeries. The highest population density areas of the towns of Crewe, Macclesfield and Congleton have between eight and fifteen pharmacies. Most of the main towns in Cheshire East are served by at least two community pharmacies. Several towns and villages have a single community pharmacy, including Audlem, Bollington, Disley, Goostrey, Haslington, Holmes Chapel, Mobberley, Prestbury and Shavington. **Error! Reference source not found.]**
- In Cheshire East, the number of community pharmacies at 16.7 per 100,000 population is similar to the national average **Error! Reference source not found.]**
- The current dispensing workload as demonstrated by the number of items dispensed per pharmacy is not significantly different to the England average i.e. within the normal range. [\[7.1. Dispensing volume\]](#)
- There are numerous pharmacies near to peripheral areas of Cheshire East in neighbouring local authorities. Residents living in these areas of the Borough use pharmacies in adjacent Health and Wellbeing Board areas to have prescriptions dispensed. **Error! Reference source not found.]**

- Socioeconomic deprivation is strongly associated with morbidity and early mortality. Cheshire East is generally very affluent, but there are areas of deprivation across the authority, mainly clustering in central Crewe [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#). Travel time mapping showed access was better for residents in more deprived areas, with those living in the most deprived areas being within a 20-minute walk or a 15-minute journey via public transport to a community pharmacy. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- Results from the public survey indicate that most (87.4%) respondents are satisfied with the overall service offered by their regular pharmacy. 78.9% were satisfied regarding knowledgeable staff, 76.3% were satisfied with their pharmacy having the things they need, 68.3% of respondents were satisfied with the range of services offered, and 66.8% were satisfied with the range of products available. Despite the number of 100-hour pharmacies falling from nine to six and weekday pharmacy opening hours narrowing, there is still good coverage of pharmacy opening hours. There is weekday access to community pharmacies from 8am in the morning and throughout the day up to midnight. Out of the 68 community pharmacies in the Cheshire East local authority footprint, 36 (52.9%) are open between 40 hours and less than 50 hours, a further 20 (29.4%) community pharmacies are open between 50 hours and less than 60 hours, four (5.9%) are open between 60 and less than 70 hours and a further eight (11.8%) are open for 70 hours or more (5 of these are 100-hour pharmacies and cannot reduce their hours below 72 hours). Care community areas with no evening or weekend provision can access the 100-hour pharmacies in neighbouring care communities and community pharmacies outside of Cheshire East. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- The public survey asked multiple questions regarding people's experiences of pharmacy opening hours, from levels of satisfaction [question 16] to the circumstances of when they found it closed [questions 17 to 20]. Most respondents were satisfied with the opening hours, 81% (507 out of 625 either very or somewhat satisfied with the current opening hours), reporting the opening hours as adequate for their needs. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- This PNA has considered the different needs of people in its area who share a protected characteristic. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#) Results from both the Pharmacy Contractors Survey and Public Survey indicate that most community pharmacies: -
 - Have a good level of accessibility for customers in wheelchairs or with mobility problems,
 - Provide privacy, with most consultations being conducted in what the customer felt was an appropriate setting
 - Can offer a same-sex consultation either in normal opening hours or by arrangement

- Also, all pharmacies have access to remote and face-to-face interpreting, translation and localisation services via the NHS Contract with LanguageLine UK
- Community pharmacies continue to show themselves to be resilient and adaptable. Located in the heart of communities, some with high levels of deprivation, pharmacies are considered essential and valuable to our residents. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)

1.2 Future need

- We have examined the impact of further closures. Six of the eight care communities have a pharmacy-to-population ratio lower than the England average; however, none are significantly lower. Nantwich and Rural has the lowest rate of pharmacies per 100,000 population but is also served by pharmacies in Winsford, Tarporley, Whitchurch and Market Drayton, which are located just outside the area. The care community would have to see a closure of three pharmacies before it would be significantly worse than the England rate. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- The prescribing of medicines was predicted to grow by 6.3% between 2024 and 2029. Unfortunately, these estimates are based on old population projections that have proved to be inaccurate. New population projections are due for release from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in May 2025. Increases in demand are likely in all areas of the country. Existing pharmacies may have to increase their capacity and review their working practices to meet this need. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- Most of the increase in prescribing need will occur among older people. This PNA has highlighted several issues relevant to older people, including poor physical access to some community pharmacies, and insufficient accessibility aids in some. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- We have taken into consideration the main strategic sites of planned housing developments and the potential increase in residents by 2028 that they represent. We conclude that even considering these increases, Cheshire East should remain generally well provided for with current pharmacy provision. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- A HWB cannot stipulate pharmacy opening hours, they form part of the contract with NHS England (NHSE). This responsibility has now been delegated to Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB). If the ICB considers there is a need for pharmacy services in an area on a Sunday, they could direct a rota as they do for Christmas day. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)
- Most of the community pharmacies (96.8%) responding to the Pharmacy Contractors Survey stated that they either had sufficient capacity within their existing premises and staffing levels to manage an increase in demand or could adjust to do so. [\[7.1. Dispensing volume\]](#)

- Most pharmacies (81.3%) offer a prescription collection service from patients' GP surgeries. All responding pharmacies to the Contractor Survey who answered the questions regarding delivery of dispensed medicines, 82.8% stated that they offer this service free of charge. Of those currently offering free delivery, 90.6% are not considering withdrawing this provision. In terms of coverage, free delivery services are available in all care community localities. [\[Error! Reference source not found.\]](#)

1.3 Recommendations

- Patients who receive dispensing doctor services can be supplied with medicines, but they may not be able to benefit from the wider range of Essential and Advanced services that community pharmacies are able to provide, or the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board and public health commissioned services. Existing pharmacies may have to increase their capacity and review their working practices to meet this need.
- Most of the increase in prescribing need will occur among older people. Despite most pharmacies having good accessibility for people with mobility issues, some still have poor physical access, and/or insufficient accessibility aids. It is recommended that NHS England, Cheshire East Council and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board review accessibility of pharmacy sites, service quality and uptake, including consideration of cultural and equalities needs.
- Pharmacies have a continued important case-finding role in relation to high blood pressure.
- Pharmacies continue to have a role in supporting patients to recover quickly from minor ailments.
- It is important that residents are aware of the wide range of services that pharmacies offer and that they understand how to access them. For example, although some residents seem aware of prescription and delivery services offered by some pharmacies, the uptake seems low. We suggest further promotion by pharmacies particularly those with large workloads and long waiting times.
- Pharmacy provision will continue to be reviewed over the course of the PNA with the planned next full PNA due to be published in 2028.

Recently announced changes to NHS England.

We are conscious that the organisation of NHS is currently under review by central government. The work of the PNA was largely concluded prior to this announcement. Whilst awaiting further details regarding future arrangements, we will continue with our statutory responsibilities in relation to the PNA 2025 as currently outlined in existing legislation. If further details regarding future arrangements are made available after to the publication of the final PNA, which are relevant to this or future PNA, these will be duly raised with and duly considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board.