

Introduction to Health and Social Care

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Pharmacy Services

Healthcare Service

Pharmacy services form a vital link between patients and the wider healthcare system. They make doctor-prescribed drugs safe, effective, and accessible. Pharmacists are trained to distribute prescriptions, give advice, and treat health concerns (Hindi, et.al., 2019).

In the UK, pharmacies operate under the National Health Service (NHS) as part of primary healthcare. Patients seeking medical care for minor diseases like coughs, colds, and allergies commonly go to them first (Savickas, et.al., 2021).

Pharmacy services not only supply medicines but also offer a range of public health services, including:

- Blood pressure monitoring
- Diabetes checks
- Smoking cessation programs
- Vaccination and flu jabs
- Emergency contraception
- Weight management support

Modern pharmacies are vital to health promotion and prevention. They advise patients on healthy living, long-term disease management, and drug compliance (Kisluk, 2024).



History of Pharmacy Services

The history of pharmacy services dates back thousands of years to the time of apothecaries, who prepared herbal and natural remedies to treat illnesses. These early practitioners mixed and prescribed plant and mineral-based medications, laying the groundwork for current pharmacological science (TTUHSC, 2024).

English apothecaries prepared medications and gave medical advice from the 12th to 16th centuries, often serving as chemists and doctors. Growing importance necessitated adequate acknowledgment and regulation of their activity.

In 1617, the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries was established in London, officially recognising pharmacy as a profession. Later, in 1841, the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain was created, and in 1868, the Pharmacy Act required pharmacists to be registered and qualified. Pharmacy became acknowledged and regulated after these changes (Express Scripts, 2023).

The NHS was established in 1948, making pharmacy services part of the UK's free healthcare system. Pharmacy has expanded from delivering drugs to providing health advice, immunizations, and digital prescriptions. Pharmacy services are more efficient and accessible nationwide thanks to electronic prescription systems (Baale, 2024).

The Importance of Pharmacy Services in the UK

Pharmacies play a critical role in relieving pressure on GPs and hospitals. By providing easily accessible care, they help:

- Reduce unnecessary hospital visits
- Support early diagnosis of conditions
- Promote self-care and preventive health
- Offer reassurance and trusted advice to the community (Hindi, et.al., 2018)

Pharmacies often help with public health efforts, like flu vaccination drives and programs to raise awareness about antibiotic resistance.

The future of pharmacy is evolving toward digital healthcare, AI-powered prescription systems, and pharmacists that can write prescriptions for some drugs on their own (Savickas, et.al., 2021).



Current functioning of the service

Pharmacy services in the UK function at three main levels community, hospital, and online/digital.

A. Community Pharmacies

These are the pharmacies you can find on main streets, in supermarkets, and at GP clinics. They are the easiest type of healthcare to go to; 95% of people in the UK live within a 20-minute walk of one (NIHR, 2016; (East Riding Health & Wellbeing, n.d).

- Dispense NHS and private prescriptions
- Sell drugs that don't need a prescription
- Provide health checks and vaccinations
- Give advice on nutrition and lifestyle
- Conduct minor ailment consultations without a doctor's appointment

To work as a pharmacist, you must be registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and follow the NHS Pharmacy Quality Scheme (UKHSA, 2019).

B. Hospital Pharmacies

Located inside hospitals, these pharmacies support doctors and nurses by ensuring patients receive the correct medication during treatment and after discharge.

They:

- Prepare specialised medicines, particularly chemotherapy treatments.
- Review complex prescriptions
- Monitor side effects and patient recovery

Provide training to medical personnel. Hospital pharmacists work closely with clinical teams to maintain patient safety and drug accuracy (Abuzour, et.al., 2021).

C. Online and Digital Pharmacies

In recent years, online pharmacies have become increasingly popular.

They allow patients to:

- Order medicines using electronic prescriptions
- Receive medicines by home delivery
- Access advice via chat or video consultation

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) keeps an eye on digital services and makes sure they obey strict data protection rules to protect patient privacy (Miller, et.al., 2021).

D. Governance and Regulation

Pharmacy services are regulated by:

- NHS England – funding, service delivery, and standards.
- General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) – licensing and professional conduct.
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) – professional guidance and training (RPS, 2024).

Major Challenges Faced by Pharmacy Services

Medicine Shortages and Supply Chain Disruptions

In recent years, UK pharmacies have experienced serious medicine shortages.

Causes include:

- Global manufacturing delays
- Brexit-related import issues
- Increasing demand for chronic illness medicines
- Rising costs of raw materials (Oximio, 2025).

The NHS Confederation (2024) says that more than half of community pharmacists say they run out of common medicines like antibiotics or blood pressure meds every week. This makes it harder for pharmacists to care for patients and adds to their burden because they have to call doctors for new prescriptions or explain delays to patients (NHS Confederation, 2024).

Workforce and Funding Pressures

Due to changes in NHS funding and more work, many community pharmacies are having trouble making ends meet. More than 1,250 community pharmacies in the UK have closed in the past decade (NPA, 2025).

Challenges include:

- Staff burnout due to long hours and high patient numbers
- Difficulty recruiting trained pharmacists
- Reduced profit margins on medicines
- Pressure to provide additional services without increased funding

These issues threaten the long-term sustainability of local pharmacies, especially in rural or deprived areas (Buchan, et.al., 2017).



Task 2

The National Health Service (NHS) is one of the most remarkable achievements in British social history. Established in 1948, it revolutionized UK healthcare by providing free, comprehensive medical services to all citizens. A nation greatly damaged by war and economic suffering fought for equality, social fairness, and better living conditions, which led to the NHS. Its roots and principles help explain how the service evolved into the system it is now and the difficulties that continue to shape it (P Punjabi, 2023).

Before the establishment of the NHS, Britain's healthcare system was fragmented and heavily dependent on individual income. Medical treatment was scarce for most, especially working-class people. Voluntary hospitals and charities helped, but not enough to meet population requirements. The 1911 National Insurance Act insured certain workers but excluded dependents, the unemployed, and significant parts of society. Indeed, disease often led to poverty, and many families avoided medical treatment due to cost (Locke, 2020).

During the Second World War, Britain developed a national emergency medical service to support soldiers and civilians. This showed that a centralized, government-run system could deliver efficient, fair healthcare to everyone. The conflict also enhanced social cohesiveness and the notion that the state should do more to ensure public welfare. The establishment of a publicly funded health service was facilitated by the cooperative and reconstruction atmosphere that prevailed after the restoration of peace (Bivins, 2017).

The turning point came with the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1942, written by Sir William Beveridge. The report identified five "giant evils" in society: Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor, and Idleness and proposed a comprehensive welfare system to combat them (EBSCO, 2023). A universal national health service was one of its main recommendations. The 1945 Labour government under Clement Attlee was committed to implementing Beveridge's principles. The National Health Service Act of 1946 was introduced by Health Minister Aneurin Bevan. Bevan founded the NHS on July 5, 1948, against medical and political resistance (History of Government, 2023).

The new service was founded on three core principles: that healthcare should be available to everyone, that access should depend on need rather than ability to pay, and that the system should be funded collectively through taxation. These principles represented a major moral and social shift. Medical care, hospitalization, and medication were free for the first time in British history. Bevan famously said, "the NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it," indicating his opinion that public support was crucial to its sustainability (Young Fabians, 2013).

Over time, the NHS has evolved to meet changing needs and circumstances. The service is now independent in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, each having its own government and financing. NHS England, under the Department of Health and Social Care, plans and delivers most healthcare services in England. Over £180 billion in annual funding comes from taxation and National Insurance contributions. Integrated Care Systems, NHS Trusts, and Primary Care Networks promote hospital-GP-community service-local authority coordination under modern reforms (NHS Confederation, 2023).

The NHS is still doing well and is still popular, although it has some big problems. The system has been under a lot of stress because of money problems, an aging population, and rising expenditures of medical equipment. There aren't enough doctors, nurses, and other professionals, which has led to long wait times and stressed staff. There is also discussion about private companies that offer NHS services. Some people who are against them believe that they endanger the basic notion of equal access. There are still problems with regional health disparities since some communities have lower services and health standards (Dayan, et.al., 2018).

In conclusion, the National Health Service was founded on the belief that good health is a basic right for everyone. Designed by William Beveridge and Aneurin Bevan in 1948, it represents equality and compassion in the UK. Despite modern challenges, the NHS upholds justice and care for all.

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