

Executive Summary

What is the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment and why is it important?

The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) is a document that must be updated every three years. The report looks at whether there are enough pharmacies (also known as ‘chemists’), in the right areas, offering the right services, to meet the needs of local people. There may be places with no pharmacies, but it would be helpful for residents if there was one nearby. We refer to these areas as ‘gaps’ because something important is missing. There can also be ‘gaps’ in what the pharmacies do. For example, a pharmacy might not offer a certain service in an area, but if they did, it would help the people who live there. The PNA identifies ‘gaps’ and suggests ways to improve pharmacies in our area.

Pharmacies can be found in many settings, including the community, hospitals and prisons.

This document focuses on:

- Community pharmacies (e.g. on the high street or inside supermarkets)
- Distance selling pharmacies (also known as ‘internet pharmacies’)
- Dispensing appliance contractors (these dispense appliances only, such as continence and stoma products, not medications).

‘Pharmaceutical services’ is a broad term that covers a wide range of services delivered in a pharmacy setting. These include, but are not limited to, dispensing medications, disposal of unwanted medicines, flu vaccination, and Emergency Hormonal Contraception service (“morning after pill”).

The PNA is mainly used by NHS England (NHSE) to help to make decisions about new pharmacies in Sandwell. It is also used to:

- Understand who makes up the population of Sandwell (e.g. age, ethnicity) and their current and future health needs.
- Understand where the pharmacies are in Sandwell and the services that they provide.
- Help with decisions on what services are funded by NHSE, local authorities, and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs).

About Sandwell

Sandwell is the 8th most deprived local authority in England. People living in more deprived areas generally live with poorer health. Data in Chapter 2 shows that people in Sandwell are more likely to smoke or be obese, and less likely to be physically active, compared to the West Midlands region and England overall. With pharmacies being in the community, they can help people to manage long-term health conditions and support healthier lifestyles.

Sandwell has quite a young population compared to the England average. This means there is a higher demand for certain services, such as the Pharmacy Contraception Service, and for Emergency Hormonal Contraception. Easy access to these services is important in reducing the number of teenage pregnancies and the risks related to this. We have tried to encourage young people under 25 to fill in the residents' survey, but not many did – so we don't know as much about how or why they use pharmacies, or how easy they find it.

Furthermore, Sandwell is a diverse and multicultural borough. People from some ethnic minority groups are more likely to have poorer health compared to people from White backgrounds. They are more likely to have some long-term conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, but less likely to access healthcare services.

Differences in health between different groups of people, that could be avoided, are known as 'health inequalities.' To help reduce health inequalities, it is important that pharmacies are accessible to all residents. Some of the things they can do include language services such as translation and interpretation and taking different cultures into account when planning services.

Sandwell pharmacies and their services

Currently there are 80 pharmacies in Sandwell for a population of 344,582 residents, of which four are distance selling pharmacies and eight are former 100-hour pharmacies. This means that there is one pharmacy per 4,307 residents, which is better than the England average of one pharmacy per 5,127 residents. Most residents live within a 15-minute walking distance of a pharmacy and all residents live within 20-minute travel via public transport to a local pharmacy. There are numerous pharmacies with extended opening hours covering weekday early mornings, evenings, Saturdays and Sundays.

Three levels of pharmaceutical services are provided by pharmacies:

- **Essential services:** must be provided by all pharmacies and are commissioned (paid for and arranged) by NHSE.
- **Advanced services:** may be provided by pharmacies only if training is completed, commissioned by NHSE.
- **Enhanced or locally commissioned services:** may be provided, planned to meet the needs of the local population, commissioned by NHSE or ICB Black Country/Local Authority Public Health respectively.

‘Necessary pharmaceutical services’ are services which the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) think are necessary to meet the needs of the local population. For Sandwell this definition includes:

- All essential services (see Chapter 4), and the following advanced services: Flu Vaccination Service, Hypertension Case-Finding Service, New Medicine Service, Pharmacy Contraception Service, Pharmacy First Service.

There are nine advanced services provided by a range of pharmacies in Sandwell.

1. **Flu Vaccination Service-** the flu vaccination is offered to people who are at increased risk of serious complications from the influenza virus (flu).
2. **Hypertension Case-Finding Service-** to identify people aged 40 and above who have not previously been diagnosed with hypertension (high blood pressure) and refer those with likely hypertension to general practice (GP) for ongoing management.
3. **New Medicine Service-** to support patients with a long-term medical conditions to understand the medicines they are taking, to ensure safe and effective usage. This involves an initial conversation, and two further follow-up appointments.
4. **Pharmacy Contraception Service-** to enable community pharmacy teams to offer advice and start oral contraception ("the pill"), continue oral contraception prescribed elsewhere, and provide ongoing management e.g. annual reviews, blood pressure checks. They should signpost patients on where to access other related services e.g. "morning after pill", long-acting reversible contraception such as the Mirena Coil.
5. **Pharmacy First Service-** pharmacists can offer advice, and treatment, where clinically appropriate for seven common conditions (with age/sex restrictions).

6. **Lateral Flow Device Service-** provision of lateral flow device testing for patients who are at increased risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and may be eligible to treatment if they test positive.
 7. **Smoking Cessation Service-** for patients who start a Stop Smoking programme as an inpatient in hospital and are referred to their community pharmacy to complete the programme.
 8. **Appliance Use Review-** to improve patient knowledge and use of any appliance by assessing how the patient uses it and helping with any issues with use, storage, and disposal.
 9. **Stoma Appliance Customisation Service-** to offer personal customisation of a quantity of more than one stoma appliance, to make it more comfortable for patients and reduce waste.
- There is excellent provision of the Flu Vaccination Service, Hypertension Case-Finding Service, New Medicine Service, Lateral Flow Device Service, and Pharmacy First Service, with good provision across all towns. **No gaps found.**
 - The number of people using the Stop Smoking Service through pharmacies is low. This is likely because the people beginning their Stop Smoking journey in hospital are referred to a different Stop Smoking service funded by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, not delivered through pharmacies. **No gaps found.**
 - A reasonable proportion of pharmacies across Sandwell may provide the Pharmacy Contraception Service. **No gaps found.**
 - Although just under of quarter of pharmacies in Sandwell may provide Appliance Use Review (AUR; 23%) and Stoma Appliance Customisation (SAC; 18.5%), no residents accessed these services in community pharmacies between January-October 2024. This is likely because people access these services elsewhere (e.g. Dispensing Appliance Contractors). **No gaps found.**

Enhanced and locally commissioned services include, but are not limited to, COVID-19 vaccination service, Respiratory Syncytial Virus and Pertussis Vaccination Service, Minor Ailment Service, Community Eye Care Service, Specialty Palliative Care Drugs Service, Supervised Consumption of Methadone, Needle Exchange, and Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC; “morning after pill”). **There is reasonable provision of enhanced and locally commissioned services across the borough.**

There are no pharmacies that can provide EHC free of charge in Tipton and Rowley Regis, therefore a gap. This is likely to change in the future with more pharmacies planning to provide this, and the national Pharmacy Contraception Service introducing EHC as part of the service.

We look at the likely changes in the population of Sandwell, and the number of houses planned to be built, to get an idea of whether demand on pharmacies will change over the lifespan of the PNA (2025-2028). Taking this into account, **we do not predict that there will be a gap in the provision of services.** However, we will need to keep monitoring the number of houses built, whether these properties are lived in, and pharmacists' workloads to make sure they can continue to meet the needs of local people.

Recommendations:

The report makes the following recommendations to improve pharmaceutical services in Sandwell:

- Services provided by pharmacies should be widely promoted by pharmacies and other healthcare services. This could be through use of posters, leaflets, and video advertisements that are easily accessible to patients.
- More pharmacies should offer the “morning after pill” free of charge, especially in Tipton and Rowley Regis.
 - There is a plan for more pharmacies across Sandwell to provide the “morning after pill” free of charge, including in Rowley Regis and Tipton. Also, the national Pharmacy Contraception Service will be expanded to include provision of the “morning after pill” which is expected to address this gap.
- Pharmacies should be easily accessible to all:
 - **Wheelchair access:** we should aim for all pharmacies to have wheelchair access to all areas.
 - **Language and communication:** we should aim for all pharmacies to provide spoken and written information in various accessible formats to ensure equal access for people with hearing or visual impairment, or those who do not have English as their first language. These might include large print written information and use of ‘Language Line’ for example.
 - The support available to ensure everyone has fair and equal access to pharmacies should be widely promoted by pharmacies.

Future Sandwell PNAs should:

- a) Include local residents in the group working on the PNA.
- b) Consider alternative methods of engagement at the initial consultation stage to ensure that we capture diverse views at an earlier stage of the process.
- c) Use datasets to obtain information on service sign-up and service activity, and contractors' survey for information on willingness to sign-up. This would help to avoid discrepancies between contractor surveys and datasets and shorten the contractor survey.