

Briefing 012/24: What pharmacy owners told us in June 2024

As part of Community Pharmacy England's commitment to working more closely with pharmacy owners – listening to them better, as well as engaging more regularly via events and other channels – we sought input from the sector ahead of our [June 2024 Committee Meeting](#).

Between 3rd and 18th June, our June Committee opinion poll was conducted to gather views from all pharmacy owners on a series of topical issues. The questions asked pharmacy owners what things their pharmacy businesses have had to stop doing due to the ongoing pressures and to share their messages for the incoming Government. We also repeated the polling section tracking the ongoing financial and operational pressures facing the sector.

Thanks to all those who took the time to complete the survey. This briefing summarises what you said.

Opinion Poll Results

Participants representing 2,114 pharmacy premises in England engaged with our June survey, giving a snapshot of thoughts from across a range of different pharmacy businesses across the country.

Message to the new Government

Respondents were asked to feed in their messages for the new Government ahead of the General Election. There was an overriding sense of a 'Call for Action' aimed at the new Government to address the sector's issues urgently, warning of the potential collapse of many pharmacies if the situation doesn't improve. Repeated comments urge the Government to invest in the health and wellbeing of the population by supporting the core funding of community pharmacies.

The main themes were:

- **Supply and Services:** Pharmacy owners emphasised the importance of ensuring the supply of medicines and building sustainable pharmacy services. The main services suggested fit with ['A Vision for Community Pharmacy'](#).

- **Funding:** There was a strong call for increased national and local pharmacy funding, recognising that current funding levels are insufficient to meet the rising operational costs, including staffing and other overheads.
- **Costs and evidence base:** A repeated theme was concern about challenging false assumptions about the pharmacy cost base using robust data.
- **Regulations:** Owners express the need for regulatory easements around the supply of medicines and services to ease pressures.
- **Recognition:** Pharmacy owners highlight their critical role in the healthcare system and the need for fair remuneration and recognition. Anger about the current critical financial situation remains very high.

Image 1: Word cloud summary of the message to the new Government from Pharmacy Owners



Impact of Pressures

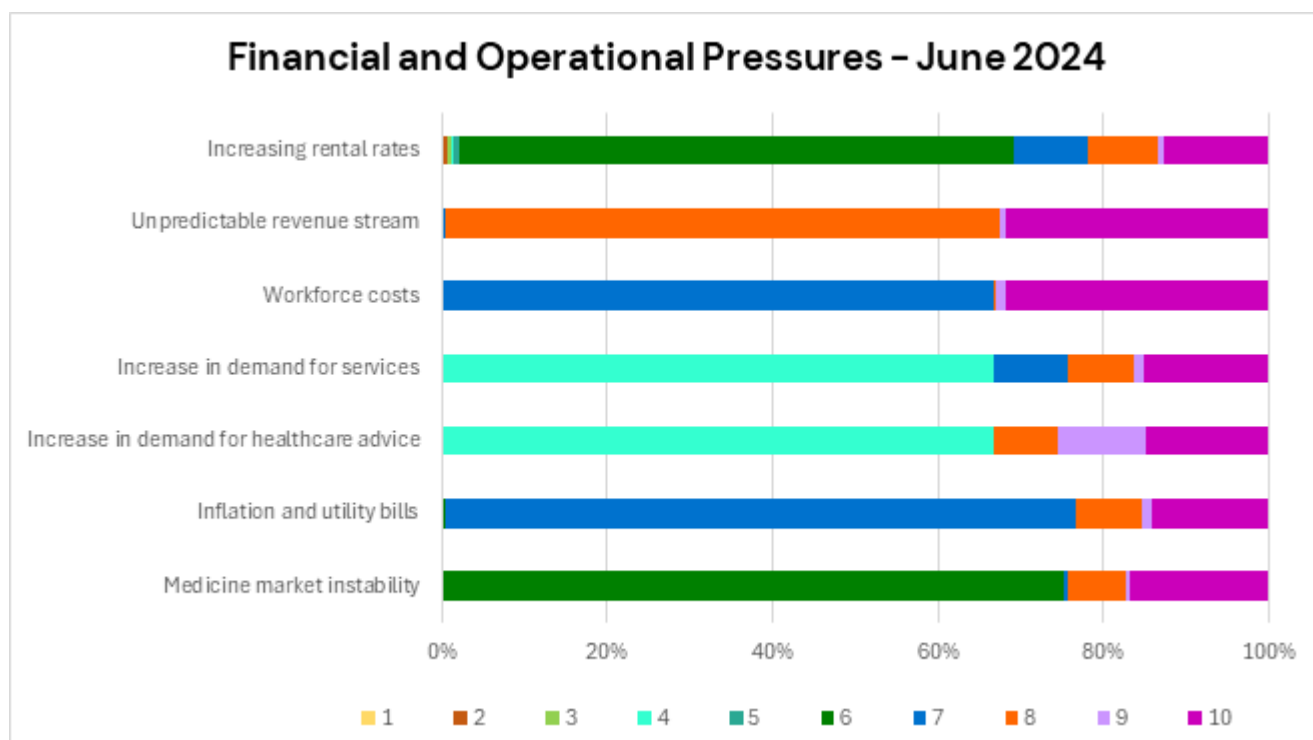
The second part of the poll set out how pharmacies have been affected by the pressures on their business. 96% of pharmacy premises report that they have stopped some locally commissioned services due to the ongoing pressures. Using locums and opening for extended hours are also operational features that pharmacies have stopped doing, with respectively 90% and 81% of the weighted respondents saying so.

Pressures Tracker

For tracking purposes, we repeated the question on pharmacy pressures from previous surveys. Participants were again asked to rank pressures from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest pressure.

In the June poll, respondents say that unpredictable revenue stream is their most intense pressure. The second most pressing issue is workforce.

Graph 2: June 2024 Financial and Operational Pressures



Note, the pressures tracker for April 2024 was included within our annual Pressures Survey. Participants representing 4,891 pharmacy premises reported that workforce cost was their highest pressure, followed by unpredictable revenue stream and medicine market instability.



Using the data

The full polling results were considered by all Community Pharmacy England Committee Members at their June Committee Meeting, feeding into plenary discussions about positioning, and discussions at the Communications and Public Affairs Subcommittee. Members looked at what the results mean for our current and future priorities, as well as drawing on this valuable information, augmented with feedback from the Regional Representatives and LPCs throughout the meeting.

The findings will inform our ongoing work, including to press for funding uplifts and reviews of margin and medicines supply through our influencing programme. We are continuing to reference poll findings in our media and political lobbying work, and poll results along with feedback from LPCs and Regional Representatives are used on an ongoing basis to inform work and strategy.

Polling data is also available to LPCs through [a webpage in our members area](#).

Next Steps

Community Pharmacy England's immediate focus is on the relationship with new Government Ministers so that we can return to critical CPCF negotiations as soon as possible. We are also rebuilding our network of advocates across the new Parliament. As always, polling results that highlight pressures will be used to help make the case for community pharmacy during this time.

Regular engagement with pharmacy owners via polling will continue to serve as an important tool for temperature-checking and consultation on key issues going forwards. We will continue to keep polling short so as not to burden pharmacy owners further, while still providing an opportunity to feed directly into the Committee discussions for those that want to do so.

If you have any queries or require more information, please contact: comms.team@cpe.org.uk