

To:
Sir Jim Mackey, Transformation Chief Executive, NHS England
Dr Penny Dash, Chair, NHS England
Dr Claire Fuller, Medical Director, NHS England
Samantha Allen, Chief Executive North East and North Cumbria ICB
cc. David Webb, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, NHS England



ICB Chief Pharmacists

15th April 2025

Re: The role of medicines leadership in the future NHS

Dear All

This letter represents the collective perspective of ICB Chief Pharmacists in England, who are responsible for overseeing the **>£19.9 billion** expenditure on medicines across England. As we navigate the complexities of health and care, it is imperative to ensure we strategically lead one of the most significant investments within the NHS: **medicines**.

Ranking second only to staffing costs, medicines are the most common therapeutic intervention across our health service and a golden thread through all care pathways. This underscores the essential role of medicines in patient care and the substantial financial impact on the NHS. Pharmacy leadership to support prescribing and use of the right medicines is highly effective at preventing the development of long-term conditions and complications of disease. This is a key enabler in the shift from acute to community, maximising prevention, supporting waiting list recovery and reducing use of urgent care. In the first year, Pharmacy First delivered nearly 2 million consultations across England which supports primary care access and value, saving £112m in GP appointments.

ICB medicines teams have demonstrated exceptional commitment and expertise, in optimising value by delivering significant cash releasing savings of **>£0.5 billion in 2024/2025**. Looking ahead, we have ambitious plans to achieve similar levels of savings in 2025/2026. We also recognise that we need to continue to transform how the system and individual people use medicines effectively (including alternatives to prescribing).

For the public to get the best from their medicines, we need professional pharmacy leadership in all sectors, including ICBs to navigate the conflicting complexities of supporting financial balance via prescribing efficiencies, equitable entry of new medicines, ensuring safe care, as well as optimising care pathways and improving population health. Prescribing is one of the most volatile expenditures in the NHS, and we are collectively keen to work with you to maintain grip on the management of this precious resource.

As a core function of strategic commissioning, we collectively lead:

- **Medicines Value:** Focussing on the sustainability of medicines spend across systems, ensuring value is delivered across all teams and sector.
- **Medicines Safety:** Reducing avoidable harms, clinical risks and enhancing the safe and quality use of medicines.
- **Medicines Optimisation:** Identifying and reducing unwarranted variation in medicines use ensuring access to essential medicines, prevention and improving population health.
- **System wide professional leadership:** Coordinating a whole system approach, emphasising the importance of collaboration across and within ICSs from highly motivated and skilled professionals.
- **Economic growth:** Ensuring the use of medicines supports the drive for economic productivity, keeps people in work and makes England an attractive system for international industry to invest in research and innovation.
- **Analogue to Digital transformation:** Facilitating the adoption of technologies to enhance shared clinical decision making, digital prescribing, point of care prescribing advice in all settings.
- **Workforce transformation:** Develop an agile medicines and pharmacy workforce enabled to improve health outcomes, unlock the potential of community pharmacy to deliver more care closer to home.

We are the experts in medicines use and prescribing, equipped with the knowledge, influence and readiness to effect necessary changes. As ICB clinical and professional leads for medicines, we stand ready to shape and lead the priorities above. We are keen to ensure that medicines leadership is a fundamental component of the new Model ICB. We would welcome the opportunity to engage and work with you directly, as approaches to strategic commissioning are developed.

Yours Sincerely

Professor Ewan Maule
Vanessa Burgess
Laura Angus
Andy White

Clinical Director - Medicines and Pharmacy, North East and North Cumbria ICB
Chief Pharmacist, South East London ICB
Chief Pharmacy Officer, NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB
ICS Chief Pharmacist, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB

On behalf of the ICB Chief Pharmacists in England