\*\*\*\*\*\*\* CPTV Press release – Pharmacy First \*\*\*\*\*\*\*

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**NHS Pharmacy First Scheme Launches Across Community Pharmacies in England, Empowering Local Healthcare Access**

Today marks a significant milestone in enhancing community-based primary healthcare accessibility as the Pharmacy First scheme officially launches across community pharmacies in Tees Valley. This groundbreaking initiative aims to streamline and expand the range of services offered by local pharmacies, ensuring residents have convenient access to essential healthcare services.

The Pharmacy First scheme is designed to empower community pharmacists to play a more integral role in delivering primary healthcare services. By offering a broader spectrum of services, these local healthcare hubs become central points for immediate and expert advice, alleviating pressure on other parts of the healthcare system.

Key features of the Pharmacy First scheme include:

* Accessible Healthcare Services: Community pharmacies will provide the service, addressing minor health concerns and providing consultations without the need for an appointment.
* Expert Guidance: Trained pharmacists will offer expert advice on various health issues, promoting preventive care and early intervention for minor ailments.
* Prompt Relief: Patients seeking assistance for common ailments, such as sinusitis, sore throat, earache, infected insect bites, impetigo, shingles and uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women can benefit from immediate support at their local community pharmacy. Appropriate treatment may also be provided if patients are suitable.
* Collaborative Care: The NHS Pharmacy First scheme encourages collaborative healthcare by fostering stronger ties between community pharmacists and other healthcare providers, creating a more interconnected healthcare network.

Jay Badenhorst, Chair of Community Pharmacy Tees Valley said ‘*As we navigate the challenges of modern healthcare, the Pharmacy First scheme exemplifies our commitment to improving access to essential services and promoting community well-being. This initiative not only recognises the vital role of community pharmacies but also empowers individuals to take proactive steps in managing their health. We encourage patients to think Pharmacy First.*’

For further information, please contact:

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**About the service**

* The Pharmacy First service enables members of the public to visit pharmacies, as a first port of call, for help with a range of common minor conditions.
* The service enables pharmacists to offer advice to patients and supply NHS medicines (including antibiotics), where clinically appropriate, for:
1. Sinusitis – for children and adults aged 12 years and over;
2. Sore throat – for children and adults aged 5 years and over;
3. Earache (Acute otitis media) – for children aged 1 to 17 years;
4. Infected insect bite – for children and adults aged 1 year and over;
5. Impetigo – for children and adults aged 1 year and over;
6. Shingles – for adults aged 18 years and over; and
7. Uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women aged 16 to 64 years.

It is hoped that the service will be expanded to include more conditions in the future.

* In the consultations with a pharmacist, people with symptoms suggestive of the seven conditions will be provided with advice and be supplied, where clinically necessary, with a prescription-only treatment under a Patient Group Direction (PGD) or a pharmacy only medicine.
* If the pharmacy team cannot help with the condition the patient is presenting with, they will be referred to the appropriate healthcare access point, such as a GP surgery or A&E.
* In addition to this, patients can continue to be able to access emergency prescription medicines or consultations on other minor conditions where they have been referred to the pharmacy by NHS 111, their GP surgery or other settings.
* The Pharmacy First service launches on 31st January 2024, but as it is an optional service so not all pharmacies will offer it. The NHS.uk website is adding a service finder to help people locate which pharmacies are providing it near them:[**https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions-and-pharmacies/**](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions-and-pharmacies/)
* The NHS will shortly launch a national patient information campaign to increase awareness of the service.

**About Community Pharmacy Tees Valley**

Community Pharmacy Tees Valley represents all community pharmacy contractors throughout the region covering Darlington, Hartlepool, Stockton on Tees, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland. We are committed to supporting contractors ensuring patients gain the maximum benefit from their medicines.

