

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 March 2025

Member's Item: Pharmacy Provision in Rainham

Report from: Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

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Summary

This report sets out a response to a Member's item raised by Councillor Anang (and supported by Councillors Perfect and Spring), in relation to pharmacy provision in Rainham.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the comments from the Integrated Care Board in response to the Member's item.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. Under Medway Constitution Overview and Scrutiny rules (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.1) Councillor Anang has requested that an item on this matter is included on the agenda for this meeting.

3. The issue

3.1. The Councillor Anang (supported by Councillors Perfect and Spring) has requested that an item be placed on the agenda in relation to the following:

3.2. "We wish to raise concerns about the significant reduction in pharmacy provision in Rainham, which has gone from having three pharmacies to now just one, with no additional provision planned.

3.3. Pharmacies play a vital role in community healthcare, offering accessible and immediate support for residents, particularly through the Pharmacy First scheme, which helps ease pressure on GPs and A&E services.

- 3.4. They are essential for prescription services, medication advice, vaccinations, and minor illness consultations, providing a crucial frontline service for those who may struggle to access other forms of healthcare.
- 3.5. The loss of two pharmacies in Rainham has left residents with reduced access to essential health services, and we are deeply concerned that there are no plans to replace or expand provision to meet local needs. Given the significant issues in Rainham with access to GPs and the Healthy Living Centre, this is exacerbated even further.
- 3.6. This is particularly worrying for elderly residents, those with long-term conditions, and those without easy transport options, who now face longer waiting times and potential delays in accessing medications and advice.
- 3.7. Given these concerns, we would like to ask the ICB the following:
 1. **Why does Rainham now have only one pharmacy, with no additional provision planned, despite the growing population and demand?**
 2. **Will the upcoming Pharmacy Needs Assessment address the gaps in provision, and if so, when can we expect action?**
 3. **What impact has the closure of two pharmacies and the failure to allow replacement provision had on residents ability to access Pharmacy First services and other essential healthcare support?**
- 3.8. Residents in Rainham deserve accessible, dependable, and high-quality pharmacy services. The current situation is not sustainable, and we urge urgent action to review, assess, and address the pharmacy shortfall to ensure our community does not continue to be disadvantaged.
- 3.9. We look forward to clear answers and a firm commitment to improving pharmacy provision in Rainham”.
- 3.10. The Committee can use any of its powers in dealing with this Member’s item, including making recommendations to officers, the Cabinet or the ICB.
4. Response from NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board
 - 4.1. **Why does Rainham now have only one pharmacy, with no additional provision planned, despite the growing population and demand?**
 - 4.1.1. There are two pharmacies on the pharmaceutical list based in Rainham - Jhoots Pharmacy, Unit 21-22 Rainham Shopping Centre and Fenns Chemist at Parkwood Green, Rainham. There are a further 17 pharmacies across Gillingham including the Tesco Extra off the Bowaters Roundabout which is well served by public transport close to Rainham.

4.2. Will the upcoming Pharmacy Needs Assessment address the gaps in provision, and if so, when can we expect action?

- 4.2.1. The requirements and processes relating to entry to the NHS pharmacy market are set out nationally in the NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 as amended.
- 4.2.2. Determining whether there is adequate community pharmacy service provision within an area is a function of each Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB). The Board is responsible for undertaking and publishing a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) every 3 years. The last PNA that was published in 2022 did not identify any gaps in pharmaceutical services. The process has commenced for development of the next PNA which will be published towards the end of 2025.
- 4.2.3. Applications for entry to the pharmacy market are made in relation to the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) for the relevant Health and Wellbeing Board area. There are various types of pharmacy applications (as per the regulations) depending on whether needs for services have been expressed in the PNA. If a need has not been identified in the PNA, prospective contractors can apply on the basis of 'unforeseen benefits'. This means that they are making the case that there are benefits that were not identified when the PNA was written.
- 4.2.4. Since the PNA requirement was introduced in 2013, no unmet needs have been identified in Medway. If a need is identified in the PNA, this could be a current gap, or one that will arise during the lifetime of the PNA. The PNA is designed to articulate the services that are required to fill these gaps. This could be for a specific service or a range of services or for services that are required at certain times of the day or on days of the week. The PNA then informs the submission of applications for inclusion in a pharmaceutical list, and the subsequent determination of such applications.
- 4.2.5. If there are changes during the lifetime of the PNA (for example when a pharmacy closes). The Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) should consider whether to publish a supplementary statement. A supplementary statement should be published if the HWB considers that the change could be relevant to the granting of a new application. When a pharmacy closes, it doesn't necessarily mean there is a need for a replacement pharmacy. In many cases the other pharmacies in the area will adjust to accommodate the extra activity.

4.3. What impact has the closure of two pharmacies and the failure to allow replacement provision had on residents ability to access Pharmacy First services and other essential healthcare support?

- 4.3.1. A Lloyds pharmacy (2-4 Station Road Rainham) closed in December 2020. There was a second Lloyds pharmacy at 8 Rainham Shopping Centre. Jhoots Pharmacy took over this pharmacy in May / June 2024 and as a result of lease issues closed the pharmacy. However, they already had another pharmacy in the Rainham Shopping centre (Units 21-22) which they had

taken over from Boots in December 2023 and adjusted to provide the services from that pharmacy.

- 4.3.2. In the Medway area, there are 51 community pharmacies which offer convenient access in the community to a range of healthcare services and often serve as the first point of contact for patients accessing healthcare services locally. Of this, 49 community pharmacies are signed up to provide the Pharmacy First service, and both of those who are not signed up, are within 1 mile of another pharmacy that does.
- 4.3.3. This information is correct at the time of writing this response, however NHS Kent & Medway continue to work closely with community pharmacies to maximise the uptake and roll-out of this and other relevant services, to make it as easy as possible for patients to access these services and reduce pressure on the wider healthcare system by doing so. As a result, it is likely that the number of pharmacies signed up will continue to increase.
- 4.3.4. In addition to this, all pharmacies providing NHS services are obliged to provide what are known as “essential services” such as the dispensing of medicines and advice and guidance on self-care which means that they are provided by all pharmacies as standard. In addition, some optional services known as “advanced services” and a range of other services commissioned by the local NHS and public health are provided at various pharmacies. Further information on pharmacy services can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy>.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. There are no significant risks to the Council arising from this report.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None