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Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 October 2025

Update on Pharmacy Provision in Rainham

Report from: Dr David Whiting, Director of Public Health
Sukh Singh, Director of Primary and Community (out of hospital) Care, NHS Kent and Medway

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Summary

This report provides an update on the provision of pharmaceutical services within the Rainham area of Medway.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee is recommended to note the update.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. Under the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 the Council may review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in Medway. In carrying out health scrutiny a local authority must invite interested parties to comment and take account of any relevant information available to it, and in particular, relevant information provided to it by a local Healthwatch. The Council has delegated responsibility for discharging this function to this Committee and to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in the Council's Constitution.

2.2. The NHS (Pharmaceutical Services and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 set out the legislative basis for developing and updating Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments (PNAs).

3. Background

3.1. On 13 March 2025, this Committee considered a Member's Item on pharmacy provision in Rainham, following concerns raised by Rainham Ward Councillors about a reduction in pharmacy provision. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) responded to the queries raised both within the report and at the meeting. It was explained that determining whether there is adequate community pharmacy service provision within an area is a function of each

Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) through its responsibility to undertake and publish a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA). Since this requirement had been introduced, there had been no unmet need identified within Medway. Following the meeting, it was agreed that the Chairperson of the Committee organise a meeting with the Chairperson of the Health and Wellbeing Board, along with representatives from Public Health and the Integrated Care Board, to discuss the matter further.

- 3.2. A follow up meeting was held on 21st May 2025 which reiterated the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board, it was explained that in addition to its role in carrying out and publishing a PNA, the Board could also issue supplementary statements where there were needs identified within an area, such as when a pharmacy closes. This had not occurred in relation to Rainham and therefore the Integrated Care Board had not commissioned additional pharmacy provision for the area. It was made clear that determining whether there is adequate community pharmacy service provision within an area is a function of each Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.3. The Committee then considered the updated draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) at its meeting on 20 August 2025 and during the debate the Committee raised concerns that due to the limitations of the PNA and how it was developed (in that it only related to core pharmaceutical services and did not cover quality of services), it did not reflect the true picture of pharmaceutical provision in Medway and gave the impression that service levels and coverage was far stronger than the reality, and that it did not draw attention to the real risks of some pharmacies being close to closure.
- 3.4. In September, the Committee were then made aware of difficulties relating to a pharmacy in Rainham which had temporarily closed and its failure to open during its contracted hours would be considered by the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations Committee at a forthcoming meeting. This item has therefore been added to the agenda to enable the Committee to fully understand the current position and any next steps required.

4. ICB response

- 4.1. A pharmacy in Rainham has been closed since the 27 August 2025 and has been reporting the closures to the ICB daily, explaining that the reason for the closures is because a locum pharmacist cannot be found.
- 4.2. Under the terms set out in the National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 pharmacies must report temporary suspensions of service to the commissioner and must also implement their business continuity plan which includes:
 - Informing local GP practices, patients, and nearby pharmacies.
 - Displaying a notice on its premises advising the public of the duration of the suspension and what steps patients should take to access their prescriptions.
 - Updating the NHS Profile Manager so that NHS 111 and online services can redirect patients appropriately.

- 4.3. The ICB has been in regular contact with the pharmacy and its management to understand why the pharmacy has been unable to secure a locum pharmacist and what actions are being taken to resume service provision as soon as practicable. The matter is being taken forward in accordance with the contract management arrangements as defined nationally in the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF).
- 4.4. There are three other pharmacies in the Rainham area including a Tesco pharmacy that is open seven days a week. The list is attached in Appendix A.
- 4.5. If a pharmacy closes permanently – either voluntarily or as the result of performance related sanctions, the HWB will be informed.
- 4.6. If the HWB considers that the change (closure) is relevant to the granting of an application for a new pharmacy, it could publish a ‘supplementary statement’ to the PNA.
- 4.7. If there are significant changes and an assessment of need is required, then the HWB would need to consider producing a new PNA.

5. Director of Public Health response

- 5.1. The new Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) was developed by a steering group that was supported by external consultants who specialise in the development of PNAs, having supported the development of over 50 PNAs since 2012. The steering group included representatives from the Local Pharmaceutical Committee; Local Medical Committee; Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board; Pharmacy and Optometry Senior Commissioning Manager; South East Pharmacy Optometry and Dentistry Commissioning Hub, Working on behalf of all Integrated Care Boards (ICB)s across the South East; Medway Council; and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 5.2. The NHS (Pharmaceutical Services and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 set out the legislative basis for developing and updating PNAs, defining what is and isn’t in scope for PNAs; as noted at HASC on 20 August 2025, the quality of services is not in scope.
- 5.3. The PNA must consider pharmacies that are included in the pharmaceutical list. If a pharmacy is not performing well, there is a process that must be followed to remove a pharmacy from the pharmaceutical list, and until that process has been completed, for the purposes of developing the PNA, that pharmacy is considered to be part of the provision in the area. Medway Council and the steering group that developed the PNA could not exclude a pharmacy that is on the pharmaceutical list based on its performance. This is not a choice, it is a consequence of the legislation.
- 5.4. Providers of pharmaceutical services can apply to provide services in an area based on what are called “unforeseen benefits”. Such applications are considered on the grounds of i) choice; ii) benefit to people with protected characteristics; iii) benefits that are innovative. There have been two recent

applications on this basis and neither were found to provide unforeseen benefits.

- 5.5. Changes to the financing of pharmacies introduced by the Department of Health and Social Care from 2015, especially the flat funding model from 2019 to 2024, may have led to widespread financial strain and a reduction in the number of pharmacies across England. While there have been some recent funding increases, they do not yet close the gap between costs and reimbursement, and closures continue.
- 5.6. An economic analysis published in March 2025 showed that 47% of pharmacies were not profitable in their last accounting year ([Economic analysis of NHS pharmaceutical services in England](#)) and market stability is a significant concern across the country.

6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Future legal challenge	If NHS England receives a legal challenge to the services they commission based on the PNA, the local authority could also be part of that legal challenge.	The process met the requirements of the legislation and ensured that the PNA is a robust document.	DIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

7. Consultation

- 7.1. Insight from members of the public and from pharmacists was sought in the preparation of the draft PNA. A formal 60-day consultation on the completed draft PNA took place from 7 May 2025 to 6 July 2025 and a summary of feedback and changes resulting from the consultation have been included in the drafted final version of the PNA in Appendix 1. Members of both the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to comment during the 60-day consultation period.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. There are no direct financial implications for the Council that arise from this report.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. Local authorities through their Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs) are under a statutory duty to develop and update their PNA every 3 years. NHS (Pharmaceutical Services and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013 and the NHS Act 2006 as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, set out the requirements to develop and update PNAs.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix A – Pharmacies in or near Rainham.

Background papers

[Member's Item: Pharmacy Provision in Rainham - 13 March 2025](#)

[Consideration by HASC of the PNA 2025-2028 at its meeting on 20 August](#)

[Latest PNA](#)

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Appendix A

Pharmacy name	Address	Opening hours							Distance from Jhoots
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
Tesco Pharmacy	Courteny Road Gillingham ME8 0GX	09:00-21:00	09:00-21:00	09:00-21:00	09:00-21:00	09:00-21:00	09:00-21:00	10:00-16:00	1.1 miles
Phoenix Ltd	373 Maidstone Road Wigmores Gillingham ME8 0HX	09:00-18:00	09:00-18:00	09:00-18:00	09:00-18:00	09:00-18:00	09:00-13:00	Closed	1.2 miles
Fenns Chemist	33-35 Parkwood Green Rainham ME8 9PW	09:00-17:30	09:00-17:30	09:00-17:30	09:00-17:30	09:00-18:00	09:00-16:00	Closed	1.2 miles