

From Emma Quinn
Pharmacy Lead, SPPG



By email

To Community Pharmacies in the Northern
Health & Social Care Trust area

**Strategic Planning and Performance
Group**

12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BS
Tel: 02895 363926
Email: Emma.Quinn@hscni.net

Date: 4th September 2026

Dear Colleague,

**EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY PHARMACY OVER-THE-COUNTER CODEINE BRIEF
INTERVENTION & REFERRAL PILOT SERVICE: PILOT EXTENSION AND
INVITATION FOR AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO PROVIDE THE SERVICE**

The purpose of this letter is to advise participating pharmacies that the Community Pharmacy Over-the-Counter (OTC) Codeine Brief Intervention and Referral Pilot Service has been extended, and to invite Expressions of Interest from additional Community Pharmacies within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) area that would like to take part in delivering the service.

Extension to the Pilot Service

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has confirmed that the pilot, initially commissioned from 13th April 2026 until 13th September 2026, will be extended until 31st March 2027, subject to available funding. The service is dependent on available funding therefore, it may be paused or withdrawn if funding is no longer available. PHA will continue to undertake a formal evaluation of the service during this period and there will be the potential to extend the pilot further, subject to available funding.

Expression of interest

Following confirmation of the pilot extension, we are inviting additional Community Pharmacies within the NHSCT area to express an interest in providing the service.

Since its introduction, the Community Pharmacy OTC Codeine Brief Intervention and Referral Pilot Service has demonstrated the important role of community pharmacy in identifying and supporting individuals who may be experiencing problems associated with

the use of OTC codeine products. Participating pharmacies have delivered timely interventions, advice and signposting within an accessible, non-stigmatising setting, helping individuals to access appropriate support, including referral to the NHSCT Community Addiction Service.

Feedback and early service activity indicate that the pilot is benefiting patients by improving health and wellbeing and reducing the potential harms associated with problematic OTC codeine use. The continued delivery and expansion of the service is therefore considered important in ensuring that local populations can access effective support and referral pathways within their communities.

If you wish to be considered for this Pilot Service and have not already submitted a contract, please complete the Expression of Interest Form in Appendix 1 and return it to Michael.McCabe@hscni.net by 5pm on Monday 21st September 2026; forms received after this date and time will not be accepted. N.B. If successful, pharmacies will be advised on next steps including contract submission and service commencement.

Selection of Pilot Service Providers

Community Pharmacies who express an interest to provide the Pilot Service will be considered based on the following;

- Availability of an appropriate consultation area, as outlined in the Service Specification

If more Pharmacies express an interest than funding permits then consideration will be given to the following;

- Total number of contracted opening hours
- Geographical location to ensure access to the service across the NHSCT area
- Contracted to provide other HSC commissioned Community Pharmacy Harm Reduction Services

Resources

The Service Specification, supporting resources and previous correspondence for the pilot are available on the [BSO Harm Reduction Services website](#). Printed copies of some resources, including the Risk Assessment Tool and information leaflets, will be issued by PHA to all participating Community Pharmacies.

Remuneration and reimbursement

Remuneration for the Over the Counter (OTC) Codeine Brief Intervention & Referral Pilot is provided by PHA.

The payment for service delivery consists of the following components:

- A one-off set up fee of £200 per Pharmacy Contractor
- A fee of £20 per completed Brief intervention and Risk Assessment form
- A fee of £10 per completed referral to the NHSCT Community Addiction Service

Training Requirements

Prior to service commencement, relevant pharmacy staff will be expected to undertake the required training as outlined in the Community Pharmacy Over-the-Counter (OTC) Codeine Brief Intervention & Referral Pilot Service Specification.

The ASCERT “*Codeine Awareness and Brief Interventions for Pharmacists*” training, as outlined in the training requirements section of the Service Specification, can be accessed via the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xL8t9ARQphU>. **N.B. You may need to copy and paste the link into your browser.**

If you have any queries in relation to this letter please contact your Local Primary Care Office in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Quinn
Pharmacy Lead, SPPG



Stephanie Hanlon,
Joint Substance Use Lead,
PHA



Dr Lisa Byers, PHD, IP, MPSNI
Controlled Drugs Accountable Officer

Appendix 1

Community Pharmacy Over-the-Counter (OTC) Codeine Brief Intervention & Referral Pilot Service Expression of Interest
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Pharmacy name	
Contractor number	
Pharmacy premises address	
Name of Pharmacist(s) responsible for the service	
Email address	
Telephone number	

Pharmacy Opening Hours

Complete table below with the pharmacy's actual opening hours.

	Opening Time	Closing Time	Lunch-break
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM TO BE RETURNED:

To Michael.McCabe@hscni.net By 5pm on Monday 21st September 2026

Forms received after this date and time will not be accepted