# Sharp Increase in Pharmacy Closures Across England



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Pharmacy closures in England have significantly increased, with industry experts reporting that up to 10 pharmacies shut down each week. Data collected between January and April 2023 indicates that 177 pharmacies closed during this period. The National Pharmacy Association (NPA) highlighted that in 2022 there were 403 closures, compared to 91 the previous year.

A major contributing factor to these closures is the shortfall in government funding. NPA Chief Executive Paul Rees stated that the current funding fails to cover the cost of dispensing medicines, forcing pharmacies to subsidize the NHS from their own resources. This financial strain, combined with high inflation, leaves many pharmacies facing closure or severe service reductions.

Significant chains like Boots and LloydsPharmacy have already closed multiple branches, with LloydsPharmacy ceasing all operations in January. These closures impact the government's Pharmacy First scheme, which aims to reduce pressure on general practitioners by giving pharmacists more authority to treat common conditions.

NHS Business Services Authority data from October shows that only 11,414 community pharmacies remained operational in England for the 2022/23 financial year.

Healthwatch England's Chief Executive, Louise Ansari, expressed concern over the closures, emphasizing the essential role pharmacies play in providing advice, diagnosis, and treatment for minor health issues. She noted that the closures particularly affect older people and those without easy access to alternative pharmacies.

In response, the Department of Health and Social Care announced up to £645 million in new funding over two years to support community pharmacy services, including the Pharmacy First initiative. They are also currently consulting on the funding and contract arrangements for the 2024/25 period.