Community Pharmacy Surrey & Sussex

Community Pharmacy Hypertension Case Finding service - Pathways enablers to increase blood pressure service uptake and support neighbourhood collaboration.

1. Introduction

Maintaining a healthy blood pressure is one of the most important factors in reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, and complications of diabetes. High blood pressure (hypertension) is often asymptomatic, making proactive case finding essential.

The NHS Community Pharmacy Hypertensive Case Finding Advanced Service, commissioned in October 2021, enables community pharmacies to play a key role in identifying undiagnosed hypertension and supporting population health. The public will know this as NHS Community Pharmacy Blood Pressure Check Service.

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2. Service Overview

The Community Pharmacy Hypertensive Case Finding Service is an Advanced Service, meaning pharmacies can choose to opt in. In Sussex, uptake has been strong, with:

- 96% offering the service
- Excellent geographical coverage

Activity (2024–2025):

- 53,586 Clinic blood pressure (BP) checks completed
- 2,638 Ambulatory blood pressure monitor (ABPM) Completed

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3. Aims and Objectives

The service aims to:

- Identify people aged 40 years and over (and eligible under 40s) with previously undiagnosed hypertension
- Provide ambulatory blood pressure monitoring (ABPM) where clinically indicated
- Refer patients to general practice for diagnosis confirmation and management
- Support GP practices by undertaking:
    - Ad hoc BP checks
    - ABPM measurements (on request)
- Promote healthy lifestyle behaviours to reduce cardiovascular risk

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4. Service Delivery Model

- The service can be delivered by any appropriately trained member of the pharmacy team

- Patients can:
    - Walk in
    - Book an appointment
    - Be referred or signposted by their GP practice

- Results are recorded on pharmacy IT systems (e.g. PharmOutcomes) and shared with GP practices via GP Connect Update workflows

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5. Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria
- Adults aged 40 years and over without a diagnosis of hypertension
- Adults aged 35–39 years (at pharmacy discretion)
- Adults under 40 with a family history of hypertension (at discretion)
- Adults (18+) referred or specified by a GP practice

Exclusion Criteria
- Under 40s (unless meeting exception criteria or GP referral)
- Patients already receiving regular BP monitoring
- Patients requiring daily BP monitoring (e.g. 7-day home readings)
- Patients with atrial fibrillation or irregular heartbeat

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6. Clinical Standards

The service is delivered in line with NICE NG136 guidance, ensuring:
- Accurate BP measurement
- Appropriate use of ABPM
- Safe referral pathways into general practice

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7. A Pilot Pathway was conducted to test aligning workstreams: The Pilot Outcomes (Sussex)

This pilot commenced in May 2022 and data was collated for a period of approx. 6 months. This was developed in Sussex to link the Community Pharmacy Hypertensive Case Finding service and bp@home as well as ambulatory blood pressure monitoring. There was collaboration across Primary Care between Primary Care Networks and Community Pharmacy colleagues. This involved the practice identifying a cohort of patients requiring a BP check and using text messaging to invite them to either complete their BP check at home or visit a participating pharmacy.

Pilot sites included:
- Bexhill PCN (East Sussex)

- Coastal and South Downs PCN (West Sussex)
- Deans and Central PCN (Brighton & Hove)

Results:
- 2,683 invitations sent
- 57% patient response rate
- 77 new diagnoses of hypertension identified

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8. Benefits of the Pathway

For Patients
- Convenient access via local pharmacies
- Increased choice and flexibility
- Early detection of hypertension

For GP Practices / PCNs
- Reduced administrative burden
- Increased capacity
- Improved accuracy of BP records

Supports:
- Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF)
- PCN Directed Enhanced Service (DES)
- Population health management and health inequalities work

System Benefits
- No loss of GP income
- Improved cardiovascular outcomes
- Stronger collaboration across primary care

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9. How to implement additional pathways to work in collaboration

The following sections 10 and 11 outline two different ways of enabling pathways.

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10. Supporting Primary Care: The Digital Case-Finding Pathway

A targeted hypertension case-finding pathway developed using digital tools such as AccuRx and SMS messaging to support collaboration between GP practices and community pharmacies. This is known as The Sussex AccuRx Pathway and has been rolled out based on the outcomes of the pilot testing.

Key Features

- GP practices identify cohorts (e.g. patients over 40 with no BP recorded in 5 years)
- Patients receive a text invitation to attend a participating pharmacy
- Includes a link to the NHS "Find a Pharmacy" service
- Patients self-book or walk in

Pharmacy Process

1. Conduct BP check
2. Upload results to IT system e.g. PharmOutcomes
3. Share results with GP practice via GP Connect
4. Provide ABPM where indicated
5. Trigger GP follow-up where required

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11. GP Authority Letter

This is a pathway into the Community Pharmacy Hypertensive Case Finding service, and it constitutes a local referral process.

Practices may wish to target specific cohorts of patients that are beneficial for them to invite to have a BP check at their local community pharmacy incorporating the NHS Find A Pharmacy link into the text messages.

Practice, PCNs or community led events can signpost these people into community pharmacies by asking them to use the Find A Pharmacy link which aligns with the patient's postcode to show local pharmacies that can provide the service.

To maximise uptake and streamline referrals:

- GP practices/PCNs can sign a GP Authority Letter
- Enables pharmacies to provide the service to defined cohorts without individual referrals
- Ensures:
    - Full audit trail
    - Efficient service delivery

Current Uptake:

- 29 GP practices signed up across Sussex

Eligible Cohorts Include:

- Adults (18+) with no BP check in the last 5 years
- Patients with high BP readings but not on the hypertension register
- Individuals identified at community outreach events
- Patients identified through Pharmacy Contraception Service with elevated BP

Additional cohorts could be added dependent on discussion and service specification alignment.

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12. Additional Resources

The following documents are included:

- Community Pharmacy Hypertensive Case Finding Service Case Study
- Community Pharmacy Service Specification
- Find A Pharmacy Link
- Community Pharmacy Patient Website There is a separate page for each of the services, providing patients with information about the individual services and directing them to the NHS website to find a pharmacy that offers the service. This website can be used by the public and other healthcare providers such as GP practices to provide information on these services and direct patients to pharmacies that offer them.
- GP Authority letter template (Appendix A)

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13. Conclusion

The Community Pharmacy Hypertensive Case Finding Service is a high-impact, scalable intervention that supports early detection of hypertension, improves patient outcomes, and reduces pressure on general practice.

Through strong collaboration between community pharmacy, GP practices, ICTs and PCNs—supported by digital tools and clear referral pathways—Sussex has demonstrated a successful model for population-level cardiovascular disease prevention.

Please contact LPC@communtiypharmacyss.co.uk for further support

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Last reviewed: 26th April 2026
Next Review Date: April 2027

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Appendix A - GP Authority Letter

Dear Pharmacist and Pharmacy team,

I am writing to confirm that our practice(s) have agreed that registered people who are eligible can have a blood pressure check as a GP referral as part of the national Hypertension Case Finding service at a commissioned community pharmacy.

List the GP practices that have agreed to a letter of authorisation

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This constitutes the GP referral of a cohort that is required by the specification.

You do not now need to receive direct referrals for individual people that are registered with our practice and can proceed with blood pressure checks for anyone outlined in the cohort list below.

People may come into the pharmacy with an email, text message or verbal referral this also constitutes a GP referral.

The cohort of people identified as a GP referral include:

- A person aged over 18 years who have does not have hypertension and has not received a BP check in the last 5 years
- People who are on not on the hypertension register but have a high BP reading recorded on their GP record
- People who are tested at PCN events such as Community Centres, Libraries, etc and need a follow up clinical BP check and/or ABPM
- People who are seen under the Pharmacy Contraception service and have a high BP reading can have an ABPM under the NHS Hypertension Case Finding service

Please ensure that the results obtained are sent to the practice where the individual is registered as required in the service specification.

If a quicker clinical assessment is required, please follow the recommendations in the specification.

Yours sincerely,

Lead GP/PCN Clinical Director/Authorised person