



# Northumberland County Council

Health and Well-being Board

Thursday, 11 January 2024

## Notification of Pharmacy Closures in Blyth

**Report of Councillor(s)** Veronica Jones, Cabinet Member for Improving Public Health and Wellbeing

**Responsible Officer(s):** Gill O'Neill, Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities

### 1. **Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

This links to the corporate plan 2023-26, supporting the Tackling Inequalities priority-supporting everybody to live their best lives.

*All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability- we need to find ways to help people to remain independent whatever their disability or condition. We must support people to live healthier lives and provide good, equitable services for those who need extra support to maintain health, wellbeing and independence.*

### 2. **Purpose of report**

Over the last few months, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) has notified the Health and Wellbeing Board of two pharmacy closures in Blyth, and the reduction in opening hours of the 100hour pharmacy in Blyth.

The Board is asked to consider if there are still sufficient pharmacies open in Blyth to meet the needs of the population, for collection of prescriptions, advice from pharmacists and the other services provided by community pharmacies.

### **3. Recommendations**

Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:-

- 3.1 Agree to an update to the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment completed in October 2022, by means of a supplementary statement declaring that there is a gap in essential services, new medicines service, clinical pharmacy consultation service and opiate supervision services, in the Newsham area of Blyth, between Monday and Saturday.
- 3.2 Ask that the Task and Finish group set up by the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee look into pharmacy provision and consider options for provision of pharmacy services to the Newsham community, and report back to the March meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

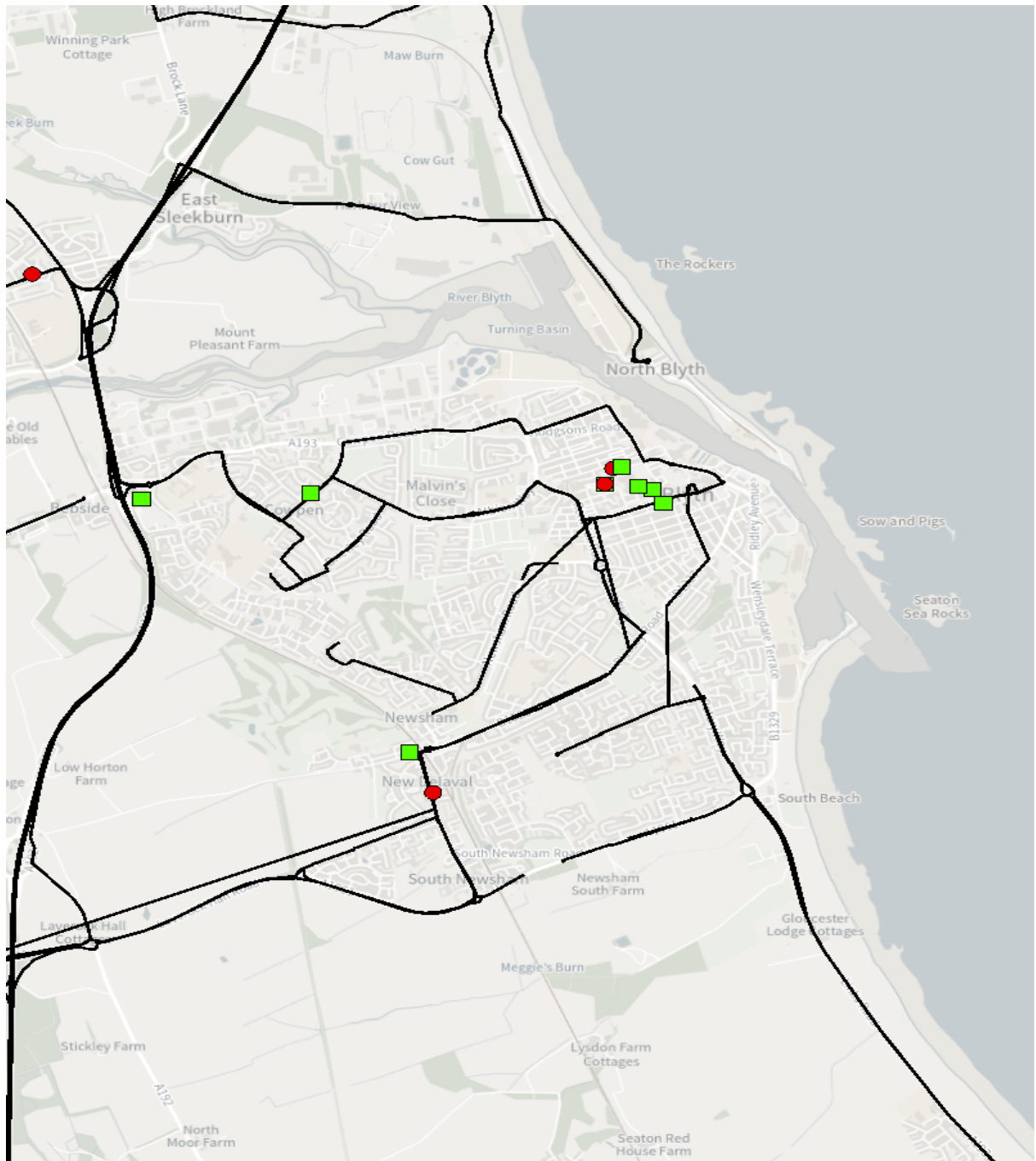
### **4. Key Issues**

The closure of the pharmacy at the health centre, **and** at Plessey Road means that of the eight pharmacies which previously served the population of Blyth, two will have closed within 3 months of each other. Additionally, the 100-hour pharmacy in Maddison Street has reduced its hours and now opens between 9am and 9pm Monday to Saturday and 10am to 8pm on Sunday.

While two pharmacies (Eden Pharmacy in Briardale Road, and Croft pharmacy in Delaval Terrace) have said they have capacity to pick up more business, it is unlikely that they will have sufficient capacity to absorb the work of more than two pharmacies. Additionally, Newsham is a distinct community, with a vulnerable population which would benefit from the presence of a pharmacy.

### **5. Background**

- 5.1 Newsham developed as a distinct community following the opening of the pit in 1860, with the building of pit cottages, brickworks and railway links. Following closure of the pit in 1923, Newsham has been absorbed into “greater Blyth”, Newsham features as a deprived area in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (20% lowest at 2019) with poor infrastructure, a large elderly population and poor housing including for people new to the area.
- 5.2 Up to 15 years ago there were 5 medical practices in Blyth. Through mergers and closures there are now 2 practices, Railway Medical Group (RMG) serving a population of around 30,000 and Marine Medical Group (MMG) serving around 15,000. Services have throughout this period been situated mainly on the Blyth Community Hospital site.
- 5.3 The Railway Medical Group has a branch surgery in Newcastle Road, Newsham, which is mainly nurse led chronic disease management clinics, but it also caters for those residents who cannot travel to the main surgery in the town centre. Closure of the pharmacy in Plessey Road would affect those patients who already have difficulty accessing services in the town centre.
- 5.4 Map of Pharmacies, Surgeries and bus routes in Blyth.



5.5

Key to Map :

Red dots= GP surgeries

Green dots = pharmacies

Black lines = bus routes

5.6

A significant proportion of GP consultations now take place remotely by email or telephone, and not necessarily in surgery premises. 95% of prescriptions are sent electronically to the pharmacy, and very few prescriptions are now on printed paper scripts. It is increasingly more important that access to medicines needs to be close to the patient's home, or where they regularly frequent e.g., where they shop.

Table 1: Monthly Prescriptions

Contractor Name	Address	Postcode	Items May 2023	Items June 2023	Items July 2023	Average No of Items
BLYTH HEALTHCARE	30 BOWES STREET	NE24 1BD	26210	23726	25,557	25164
Lloyds/ CROFT PHARMACY	4 DELAVAL TERRACE	NE24 1DJ	7486	8183	8,822	8164
BOOTS	60-62 MADDISON STREET	NE24 1EY	9908	10883	10,654	10482
EDEN PHARMACY & HEALTHCARE LIMITED	21E BRIARDALE ROAD	NE24 5LB	6663	6602	6,778	6681
BOOTS	COMMUNITY HOSP & HLTH CTR	NE24 1DX	10334	11065	10,042	10480
BOOTS	514 PLESSEY ROAD	NE24 4AA	9206	9051	8,439	8899
ASDA PHARMACY	COWPEN ROAD	NE24 4LZ	5090	5287	5,153	5210
BOOTS	31-35 WATERLOO ROAD	NE24 1BW	16488	16544	16,476	16503

It can be seen from the table above that closure of the pharmacies at the health centre and at Plessey Road combined means that approximately 20,000 prescriptions per month will need to be dispensed by other pharmacies, either in the town or by distance selling pharmacies.

- 5.7 The future direction of pharmacy services is to provide more clinical services, to complement those provided by GP surgeries. For example, COVID and flu jabs are frequently given in pharmacies. When considering the role of community pharmacy in delivering the annual flu vaccination campaign, table 2 shows the contribution made by each of the pharmacies in Blyth in 2022. (2023 figures will not be available until March 2024)

Table 2: Flu vaccines given in Blyth pharmacies – autumn 2022

Flu Vaccines		Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Total
Eden Pharmacy	21e Briardale Road	0	0	38	7	45
Boots	31-35 Waterloo Road	85	137	34	9	265
Blyth HC	30 Bowes Street	66	530	111	24	731
Boots	60-62 Maddison Street	4	23	10	6	43
Boots	Community Hosp and HC	93	91	14	13	211
Asda Pharmacy	Cowpen Road	0	0	114	3	117
Boots	514 Plessey Road	85	143	21	21	270
Lloyds	4, Delaval Place	64	16	16	12	108

The two pharmacies which have closed, gave 500 flu vaccines in 2022. It is likely that the pharmacy in Plessey Road vaccinates a very local population, which cannot easily access the town centre.

- 5.8 Pharmacies also provide services commissioned by NHS England which are additional to the standard pharmacy contract. These include advice to patients who have been started on new medicine regimens, community pharmacy clinical services (CPCS) for patients who would previously attended for a GP appointment, hypertension case finding (for those with high blood pressure) and several others. Community pharmacy is used as an alternative for those who call NHS 111.

Northumberland council commissions emergency hormonal contraception – the morning after pill (EOHC) through its sexual health contract, stop smoking advice and the encashment of nicotine replacement vouchers (NRT) and the supervision of opiates. Figures for these services are given in Table 3

Table 3: Additional Services Commissioned from community pharmacies.

**Commissioned Pharmacy Services Average Monthly Interventions**

		New Med S	CPCS	BP monitor	EOHC	Nic Vouch	Opiate Sup
BLYTH HEALTHCARE	30 BOWES STREET	134	12	0	4	30	30
BOOTS	31-35 WATERLOO ROAD	33	15	0	4	10	-
CROFT PHARM	4 DELAVAL TERRACE	0	10	0	2	10	120
BOOTS	COMMUNITY HOSP & HC	60	8	40	1	40	-
BOOTS	60-62 MADDISON STREET	26	50	15	9	20	600
BOOTS	514 PLESSEY ROAD	30	45	11	3	2	200
ASDA PHARM	COWPEN ROAD	35	30	0	2	3	-
EDEN PHARM	21E BRIARDALE ROAD	4	0	0	2	10	300

5.9 Of note is the loss of opiate supervision at Plessey Road, which provides about 20% of the current provision. The pharmacy at the community hospital provided a valuable high blood monitoring service for the community.

In future more services, not just dispensing, will be needed from pharmacies. We should not rely on distance selling pharmacies to meet all the needs of the local population, especially for services which require consultation with a pharmacist.

5.10 NHS England/ICB data given on the notice of closure of Plessey Road pharmacy states that the next nearest pharmacy is 1.1 miles away in Briardale Road. This is measured as the crow flies but is a 2 mile walk which would take an average person 30 minutes to walk. Most patients, therefore, would access pharmacies in the town centre a 1.2 mile distance as the crow flies.

5.11 While two pharmacies have indicated that they could cope with more business, it is unlikely that they could absorb the workload of the two pharmacies which have closed. The pharmacy at the health centre averaged nearly 11,000 prescriptions per month and Plessey Road nearly 9,000 scripts per month in total 20,000 prescriptions per month. On top of this, Blyth has lost significant capacity for seasonal flu vaccinations, supervised opiate consumption and blood pressure monitoring.

The “hub and spoke” model has limitations. Prescriptions are dispensed in large warehouses and sent to the local branch however, some prescription items are unsuitable for dispensing by robots. Queues develop in the pharmacy “spoke” as the on-duty pharmacist must deal with items which the robot has rejected.

5.12 Because of the unique demographics of the population in Newsham, with a high proportion of elderly people, and high levels of multiple deprivation, we recommend that any replacement pharmacy should be required to provide all essential services six days per week. There is also a gap in additional and advanced services,

particularly the new medicines service, clinical pharmacy consultation service and minor ailments service plus supervision of opiate consumption.

The town centre pharmacies are already picking up the work previously done in the community hospital pharmacy.

## 6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

6.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to

a) declare that the closure of the pharmacy in Plessey Road, combined with the closure of the pharmacy in the Community Hospital, and the reduction in hours of the 100hour pharmacy has resulted in a gap in pharmacy services in Blyth.

b) ask the Task and Finish group set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to consider options for the provision of pharmacy services in the Newsham area, in the event that publication of a Supplementary statement did not bring forward suitable applicants.

## 7. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	Consideration must be given to how these closures will impact the residents of Blyth, but more specifically Newsham
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	There are no direct financial implications for the council
<b>Legal</b>	The council has a duty to inform NHS England if any changes to pharmacy arrangements will create a gap in pharmacy services. The duties and responsibilities of a Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions of the Executive
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human resources</b>	There are no specific implications for human resources
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - not required at this point  Closure of pharmacy in Newsham Road may impact the ability of disadvantaged members of the community to access pharmacy services
<b>Risk assessment</b>	The council is obligated to update the PNA on a regular basis and when there are significant changes to pharmacy services

<b>Crime and disorder</b>	Commissioned services for opiate supervision provided by community pharmacies reduce the crime associated with illegal substance misuse.
<b>Customer considerations</b>	The fundamental aim is to ensure that pharmacy services are available to Northumberland residents.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	N/A
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	The fundamental aim is to ensure that pharmacy services are available to Northumberland residents.
<b>Wards</b>	(All Wards);

**8. Background papers**

Health and Social Care Act 2012

[Pharmaceutical needs assessments: Information pack for local authority health and \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

**9. Links to other key reports already published**

Notification of Closure of 100 hour pharmacy in Cramlington 11<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**10. Author and Contact Details**

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