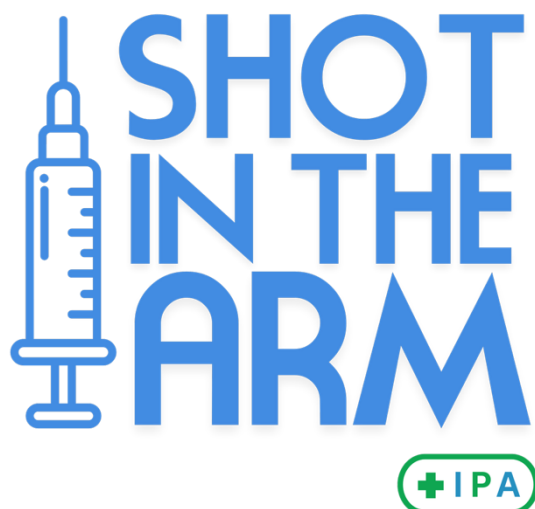




With the winter flu season fast approaching, the **Independent Pharmacies Association (IPA)** - the voice of Britain's community pharmacies – is calling on Ministers to make simple, practical changes that would free up millions of GP surgery appointments and boost vaccine uptake across England.

Community pharmacies already deliver millions of NHS flu jabs each year, providing patients with easier access and longer opening hours. However, **most flu vaccinations (around 76%) are still delivered in GP surgeries**, taking up valuable time that could be used for patients needing medical care.

By shifting more NHS flu vaccinations into local pharmacies, the NHS can **free up around 4.5 million GP surgery appointments**, while increasing convenience and protecting more people this winter.

The IPA has already shown national leadership this year, challenging the government's decision to exclude 65–74-year-olds from the Covid booster programme - **a move that has affected** over 6 million pensioners this winter.

THE OPPORTUNITY

- **17 million** NHS flu vaccinations were delivered in England last winter in GPs and Community Pharmacies.
- **13 million (76%)** in GP surgeries, **4 million (24%)** in community pharmacies.
- A 50/50 split would free up 4.5 million GP surgeries appointments for patients who need them most.
- Flu vaccination rates are **already up 26%** compared to this stage last year, showing strong public demand and the growing role pharmacies play in boosting uptake.
- Pharmacies are often open **evenings and weekends**, offering a more accessible and convenient service for patients, and driving up overall vaccination rates.

SIMPLE CHANGES TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

1. Improved Appointment Booking System

The current system is fragmented and confusing. Patients should be able to:

- **Book flu jabs directly at local pharmacies** through the **NHS App**, with real-time access to records.
- Receive **NHS flu invitation letters** that include pharmacy options alongside GP practices.

Result: Greater patient choice, easier access, higher vaccine uptake.

2. Commissioning as a Single National Framework

Currently, flu vaccine commissioning varies regionally and lacks consistency. The IPA calls for:

- A **single national commissioning framework**, with **equal payment per dose** for GPs and pharmacies.
- Standardised access and pricing across all areas.
- Empowering pharmacies to deliver **all eligible vaccines** in one location.

Result: Fair, efficient, and consistent NHS delivery nationwide.

3. Fairer Flu Jab Fee for Pharmacies

Pharmacies have faced a **seven-year fee freeze** for NHS flu vaccinations (continuing into 2025/26).

- GPs are still **paid more per flu jab** than pharmacies.
- Ongoing fee freezes risk further **financial strain and pharmacy closures**, especially in communities that rely on them most.

Result: Fairer funding keeps local pharmacies open and strengthens overall NHS vaccination delivery

ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT PHARMACIES ASSOCIATION

The Independent Pharmacies Association (IPA) is the voice of independent, community pharmacies, representing around 5,000 pharmacies across England and Wales. The IPA advocates for the interests of its members, ensuring they have the support and resources needed to provide essential healthcare services to their communities. The association works closely with policymakers, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders to promote the vital role of community pharmacies in the healthcare system.

