

Chemists could be forced to close because of 'damaging' Conservative cuts

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By Ben Glaze

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Chemists could be forced to close because of “damaging” [Tory](#) cuts, experts have warned.

The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee faces cuts of 12% this year, with more to follow the year after.

Chief executive Sue Sharpe told the [BBC](#): “It is madness and it is so damaging to the people who use pharmacies every day, it is so damaging to the NHS and it so damaging to social care because a lot of this burden will fall on the NHS in other places and on social care.”

In a letter to [Department of Health](#), Ms Sharpe said they were facing cuts of £113million in the final three months of the current financial year with further cuts of £200 million (7%) in 2017-18.

Pharmacies get around 90% of their income from the money government pays for dispensing prescriptions, costing taxpayers £2.8billion annually.



Pharmacies say they are expecting cuts of £113million

Previous plans for a £170million cut this year were delayed after two million people signed a petition opposing the change.

Earlier this year, the then health minister Alistair Burt suggested between 1,000 and 3,000 pharmacies could be closed after spending cuts,

Campaigning [Labour](#) MP Michael Dugher said: “For all their warm words on community pharmacies, including welcome moves to integrate community pharmacy into urgent care, ministers seem committed to push through a

massive package of arbitrary cuts to chemists that could force thousands to close.

“Cuts to community pharmacies are bad for our local communities, especially for people living in more isolated villages and rural communities.

“But they are also bad for the [NHS](#), which is already in crisis, and are a complete false economy as they will pile even more pressure on already overstretched GP surgeries and hospital A&Es.

“It’s not too late for Ministers to get back around the negotiating table with the industry and put a stop to these damaging cuts before it’s too late.”

Shadow Community Health Minister Julie Cooper said: “Local pharmacies are part of the life blood of communities up and down the country and many people depend on their local pharmacy.

“These budget cuts could be catastrophic for many of these already struggling pharmacies, and any closures would significantly increase the pressure on our already over-stretched hospitals and GP surgeries.

“The Department of Health needs an urgent rethink on this policy, and to reassure us that they are going to support, not cut, local community pharmacies.”

Insisting no final decisions had been taken, a Department of Health spokesman said: “We want to modernise the pharmacy sector - giving patients the best care by making the most of pharmacists’ skills.

“That’s why we are investing £112 million to deliver a further 1,500 pharmacists in general practice by 2020.

“We have worked collaboratively with the PSNC and have listened to their suggestions and counter-proposals over the course of many months.

“Ministers are considering a proposed package for the sector and no final decision has been taken, but we are committed to offering more help to those pharmacies people most depend on compared to others.”