

THE NHS SHOULD PROVIDE FREE PHARMACY HEALTH CHECKS FOR ALL ADULTS TO REVERSE BRITAIN'S CRISIS OF LONG-TERM DISEASE, SAYS NEW REPORT

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Community Pharmacy should provide health checks for all working-age adults in order to reverse Britain's rise in long-term disease, according to a new report launched today by leading think tank ResPublica.

In *'Heartbeats on the High Street: how Community Pharmacy can transform Britain's Health, Wealth and Wellbeing'* ResPublica argues that with unprecedented strain on the NHS through rising long-term conditions and an increasing population Community Pharmacy is a transformative solution for the health and wellbeing of the country.

GPs and hospitals are vital in the fight against disease, but they cannot be expected to carry the burden of unhealthy lifestyles and long-term conditions like obesity, hypertension and diabetes. ResPublica argues that we need a local, people-focused resource that can tackle these conditions at root. And because many of these conditions are linked to problems of social and economic deprivation – with Britain's top five cities for cardiovascular disease also being in the top five per cent for deprivation – we need an institution that is embedded within our most disadvantaged communities.

The report argues that Community Pharmacy is that institution. Community Pharmacy is a key presence on high streets in every part of the country. It is staffed by a network of clinically-trained professionals and has the capacity to prevent and manage conditions that cost the taxpayer millions of pounds each year. Cardiovascular disease alone costs the UK £8bn per annum, through costs to society and the wider economy. By preventing the levels of Cardiovascular disease in deprived neighbourhoods Community Pharmacy can play a significant role in reducing that cost.

To achieve this, the report calls for a greater role for Community Pharmacy in the fight for good public health. ResPublica recommends giving Community Pharmacy leadership in preventing and managing long-term conditions, by making NHS health surveillance for the over-40s available to the whole adult population.

This would mean pharmacy health checks for all adults, including hard-to-reach communities, which could reduce the rise of long-term conditions and would unlock a range of social and economic benefits.

Despite these advantages, Community Pharmacy continues to suffer cuts from Government and a lack of parity within the NHS. Pharmacies are looked on as a "poor man's GP" at a time when they should be the first port of call for Britain's health crisis.

ResPublica argues that there is an urgent need to reverse this trend and to make better use of the unique role of Community Pharmacy. In *'Heartbeats on the High Street'*, ResPublica describes this role as the 'social capital of Community Pharmacy'. By putting pharmacies at the heart of public health, the report argues that they should be at the forefront of Government thinking on localism, communities and social equality.

Rt Hon Sir Kevin Barron MP, Chair of the Health Select Committee 2005-2010 and Chair of the All-Party Pharmacy Group said: *"The NHS is in need of radical change. As we face the prospect of another winter crisis, we cannot keep repeating the same old debate over GP capacity, long-term conditions and primary care reform. What we need is a vision that includes all of the resources we have at our disposal, and puts them to*

use in a truly integrated way. This report makes a valuable contribution to the debate over how our healthcare institutions can better serve the wellbeing of society. I commend ResPublica for their important and timely intervention”.

Katharine Jenner, CEO of Blood Pressure UK said: *“Around one in three people in the UK are now living with high blood pressure which remains the single biggest cause of death. What’s more, a shocking 6.5 million people still remain undiagnosed. Blood Pressure UK supports this health check initiative, as we encourage everyone to make a habit of knowing their blood pressure numbers, as this is the first step to reducing their blood pressure and risk of stroke and heart attack. If you start making small changes to your lifestyle when you are young such as eating less salt, more fruit and vegetables, taking more exercise and keeping to a healthy weight, you will stay healthier and prevent strokes and heart disease in the future”.*

Heather Henry, Chair of the New NHS Alliance said: *“Community pharmacy is highly accessible and non-stigmatising, so it is central to the battle of tackling health inequality. This sector has long been undervalued and its potential for social, as well as clinical innovation is massive.”*

Phillip Blond, Director of ResPublica said: *“Community pharmacies are an untapped asset on our high streets and should be viewed as a key institution for delivering primary care and reducing the burden on GPs. The Government can no longer afford to overlook the value of community pharmacies to local communities and the range of social and economic benefits they can bring.”*

*****ENDS*****

Notes to Editors:

The ResPublica Trust is an independent nonpartisan think tank. Through research, policy innovation and programmes, ResPublica seeks to establish a new economic, social and cultural settlement.

Heartbeats on the High Street is supported by the National Pharmacy Association. All conclusions and recommendations contained in the report are independent of the National Pharmacy Association.

This report is available to download from the ResPublica website as of 20th November 2017. For further details please contact Brendon Marsh at brendon.marsh@respublica.org.uk or call 020 3857 8324 or 07835 059469.

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