DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Callister, to ask The Minister for Health and Social Care:

What plans she has to introduce a Pharmacy First service to make pharmacies a more direct part of primary care; and if she will make a statement

Question W-202631-0018 published on 30 10 2026, Answer published on 17 10 2026.

The Minister for Health and Social Care (Ms Christian):

The Department of Health and Social Care and Manx Care intend to introduce a Pharmacy First service in the Isle of Man, which will enable community pharmacies to play a more direct role in primary care by providing clinical assessment, advice and, where appropriate, treatment for a defined range of common conditions.

Under the proposed service, appropriately trained community pharmacists will be able to assess patients for seven specified conditions and, where clinically indicated, supply treatment, including antibiotics where appropriate, under locally developed Patient Group Directions. This will provide patients with an additional route to access appropriate clinical care directly through their community pharmacy.

Significant preparatory work has already been undertaken to support the introduction of the service. Pharmacists expected to provide Pharmacy First have received additional training in clinical assessment, including the use of equipment such as otoscopes, stethoscopes, digital thermometers and oxygen saturation monitors. Training and competency materials have also been developed, drawing on Advanced Practitioner training already delivered by Manx Care.

The Department supported Manx Care in successfully applying for Health Care Transformation Funding in 2025 to support this work.

The proposed service covers:

- **Acute otitis media (ear infection):** children and young people aged 1 to 17 years
- **Impetigo:** patients aged 1 year and over
- **Infected insect bites:** patients aged 1 year and over
- **Shingles:** adults aged 18 years and over
- **Sinusitis:** patients aged 12 years and over
- **Sore throat:** patients aged 5 years and over
- **Uncomplicated urinary tract infection:** women aged 16 to 64 years

There are 25 community pharmacies in the Isle of Man. The majority of pharmacies with regular pharmacy managers have undertaken the training required to provide the service. Two pharmacies

do not currently have facilities suitable for the clinical assessments required and would therefore not be able to offer Pharmacy First.

The Department and Manx Care are committed to ensuring that the service operates in accordance with the principles of good antimicrobial stewardship. Appropriate data collection and evaluation arrangements have therefore formed an important part of developing the service, with clinical input from our consultant microbiologist.

The principal outstanding issue before the service can be launched is ensuring that participating pharmacists have secure access to the limited patient information necessary to make safe clinical decisions. This includes information such as known medication allergies and current medicines, which is important both when assessing patients and when considering possible interactions with any treatment supplied.

Information-governance arrangements have been developed for this purpose, including a Data Protection Impact Assessment and Data Sharing Agreement incorporating feedback from the Information Commissioner's Office.

The 'NHS England Digital' service provides the secure NHS data exchange infrastructure for the Isle of Man. The Department and Manx Care are continuing to work with them, and with local GP practices, to resolve this final issue so that the service can be safely introduced.

At present, it is not possible to give a firm implementation date, as this is dependent on the resolution of the remaining technical issues. Once the technical solution and associated timescales are confirmed, the Department and Manx Care will be in a position to provide a clearer indication of when the service can be introduced.

Ends