

REPORT TO: Health & Wellbeing Board

DATE: 14th January 2026

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Public Health

PORTFOLIO: Health and Wellbeing

SUBJECT: Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek Board approval on a process to respond to pharmacy application notifications and consolidation applications received during the lifetime of the 2025-2028 Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board:

- 1) approve the process for responding to pharmacy applications; and
- 2) delegate the Steering Group to deal with application representations needed throughout the lifetime of the 2025-2028 PNA.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) is a statutory document that states the pharmacy needs of the local population. This includes dispensing services as well as public health and other services that pharmacies may provide. It is used as the framework for making decisions when granting new contracts and approving changes to existing contracts as well as for commissioning pharmacy services. Since 1 April 2013 this responsibility sits with Health & Wellbeing Boards (HWB).

Throughout the lifetime of the PNA, there will be applications to change pharmacy provision which the Health & Wellbeing Board can make written representation on.

Under the Pharmaceutical Regulations there are two types of applications pharmacies can make for inclusion in the pharmaceutical list of a HWB area. The HWB can make written representations on both.

3.2 **Pharmacy application notifications**

These are routine applications to:

- meet current needs identified within the relevant HWB PNA.
- meet future needs identified within the relevant HWB PNA.
- secure improvements or better access identified within the relevant HWB PNA.
- secure improvements or better access where these were not included within the relevant HWB PNA, i.e. they provide “unforeseen benefits”
- secure future improvements or better access specified within the relevant HWB PNA.

3.3 **Consolidation applications**

A pharmacy consolidation application is a request to merge the services of two pharmacies onto a single site, where one pharmacy closes and the other one continues to operate.

The key features of Regulation 26a are as follows:

- The two pharmacies must be located in the same HWB area.
- The opening hours of the remaining pharmacy must be retained. This is particularly relevant if one of the businesses is a 72-hour pharmacy.
- Overall the consolidated pharmacy should provide the services offered by both the pharmacies previously.
- The consolidation application can be refused if it would leave a gap in the provision of pharmaceutical services that might result in a new contract application being granted.

The HWB are one of a range of organisations regarded as an interested party. Others include nearby pharmacies, GP practices, ICB.

The HWB written representation on consolidation applications should include, as a minimum, include whether, in the opinion of the HWB, the proposed removal of premises from the pharmaceutical list would or would not create a gap in pharmaceutical services.

For either type of application, once NHSE writes to the HWB, a written response must be submitted 45 days.

3.4 **PNA Steering group**

At the July 2025 Board the HWB approved the publication of the 2025-2028 PNA.

It also delegated the PNA steering group to write supplementary statements. These are written after a decision on an application has been granted by NHSE to reflect:

- Changes of ownership
- Changes of hours and/or services provided
- Closures
- New pharmacies
- Other changes

The PNA Steering Group now asks for the HWB to grant additional delegated duty to respond to applications on its behalf as part of the NHSE decision-making process.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The health needs identified in the JSNA have been used to develop the PNA.

The PNA provides a robust and detailed assessment of the need for pharmaceutical services across Halton borough. As such it should continue to be used in the decisions around 'market entry' as well as inform local pharmacy services commissioning decisions. Local groups and partnerships should also take the findings of the PNA into account when making decisions around the need for pharmaceutical services

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any legal challenges to decisions based on information in the PNA may open the HWB up to Judicial Review. This can have significant financial implications. It is therefore vital that the HWB continues to follow national guidance in the implementation of the Regulations.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

All issues outlined in this report focus directly on this priority. Pharmacies provide a vital primary care service, close to home with open access to a wide range of essential, advanced, enhanced and locally commissioned services and the HWB have statutory

responsibilities to publish a PNA and respond to applications when these arise.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Pharmacy applications are granted on the basis of pharmaceutical need and a sound financial plan. Making representations on all new applications will ensure the PNA remains at the heart of decision making.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Pharmacy services play a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The PNA details the health needs of protected characteristic groups, people living in areas of deprivation and other vulnerable groups as well as for the population as a whole. Pharmacies play a vital role in supporting their primary healthcare needs, offering services close to home with easy access.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

There are no direct implications for this priority—that will be generated by the recommendations presented through this report.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The public survey shows pharmacies are a valued service with the majority of respondents satisfied with pharmacy opening hours and the services they provide.

6.7 Resilient and Reliable Organisation

Pharmacies continue to face significant financial challenges. The PNA reflects that whilst there are a reduced number of pharmacies in Halton (a reduction of 3, 2 in Runcorn and 1 in Widnes) that pharmacies continue to provide a vital primary care service, provide services aimed at improving access and reducing the burden on general practice.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Failure to comply with the regulatory duties fully may lead to a legal challenge, for example, where a party believes that they have been disadvantaged following the refusal by Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care Board over their application to open new premises based on information contained in the PNA

7.2 The risk of challenge to the HWB who produced that PNA is significant and Boards should add the PNA to the risk register.

7.3 A sound process, using national guidance and with support from local expertise, should be established to ensure this risk does not materialise.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The PNA seeks to provide intelligence on which to base decisions about service provision that are based on levels of need across the borough. This includes analysis of a range of vulnerable groups and the need for targeted as well as universal services to meet the range of needs identified

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct environmental and climate implications that will be generated by the recommendations presented through this report.

9.2 However, an important element of the PNA is consideration of access. This is a multi-dimensional concept. One element is the provision of sufficient services across the borough. One way the PNA assessed this was consideration of walking and public transport times. Most parts of the borough are within a 15 minute walk to a pharmacy and 30 minute public transport time. Whilst there has been a reduction in the percentage of people assessing a pharmacy by these means, nearly half of respondents still stated they used these modes of transport to get to their usual pharmacy.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013	Part 2, Regulation 3: Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment The National Health Service (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013	Sharon McAteer
Department for Health & Social Care: Pharmaceutical needs assessments Information	Pharmaceutical needs assessments: information pack for local authority health	

pack for local authority health and wellbeing boards Published July 2025	and wellbeing boards - GOV.UK	
HWBB minutes 07.07.2025	Halton Borough Council: Meetings & Agenda Information	
Halton PNA 2025-2028	Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment	