

Pharmacy First Uncomplicated Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) Pilot Service

The Pharmacy First Uncomplicated Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) Pilot Service was delivered across Northern Ireland to improve **timely access to care** for women experiencing symptoms of **uncomplicated lower urinary tract infection**, while supporting safe and appropriate use of antibiotics.

Through participating community pharmacies, eligible patients could receive a **structured clinical assessment, advice on self-care, urine dipstick testing where clinically indicated**, and **antibiotic treatment when appropriate**, without requiring a GP appointment.

Project Overview

The pilot aimed to:

- Improve **access to care** for women with uncomplicated UTIs
- Demonstrate the **potential to reduce demand on General Practice services**
- Support **effective antimicrobial stewardship** through pharmacist-led assessment

The service followed **Northern Ireland clinical guidance**, with pharmacists trained to apply a structured consultation process and supply first-line antibiotics only when clinically appropriate.

The pilot operated from **July to December 2021**, delivered through **62 community pharmacies** across Northern Ireland.

A total of **1,032 eligible consultations** were completed and included in the evaluation analysis.

Key Outcomes

Improved access to care

The service provided timely treatment through local community pharmacies, offering patients an alternative pathway to GP appointments for uncomplicated UTI symptoms.

Potential impact on GP demand

Service user and GP feedback indicates a strong **potential to reduce pressure on GP services**:

- Many patients reported they would otherwise have contacted their GP
- **Over half of responding GPs** perceived a positive impact on workload

While the evaluation did not measure actual reductions in GP activity, the findings demonstrate **meaningful displacement of demand** and support the role of community pharmacy as a first-access point for uncomplicated UTIs.

Appropriate antibiotic use

- Antibiotics were supplied in line with **clinical assessment outcomes**
- **Nitrofurantoin** was the most commonly supplied antibiotic, in accordance with first-line guidance
- Urine dipstick testing supported clinical decision-making where indicated

These findings demonstrate **safe and appropriate antibiotic prescribing**, aligned with antimicrobial stewardship principles.

Patient outcomes

Among patients with outcome data available:

- **Over half reported symptom improvement within 72 hours** following antibiotic treatment
- A small proportion reported improvement with self-care alone

This supports the clinical effectiveness of pharmacist-led management for uncomplicated cases.

Excellent patient experience

Patient feedback was highly positive:

- **98%** of respondents said they would be *likely or very likely* to use the service again
- **99%** said they would be *likely or very likely* to recommend the service

Professional Feedback and Acceptability

The service was well received by community pharmacists, GPs and patients:

- Pharmacists reported confidence in delivering the service safely
- GPs expressed support for the service model and its potential system benefits

The majority of professional respondents supported **wider rollout**, while highlighting the importance of:

Smarter Medicines Better Outcomes

- Clear eligibility criteria
 - Ongoing public awareness
 - Appropriate resourcing to support sustainability
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Partners Involved

The pilot was delivered in partnership with:

- **Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre (MOIC)** – evaluation and analysis
- **Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG)** – programme oversight
- **62 community pharmacies** across Northern Ireland

Out-of-Hours services had **limited involvement** during the pilot, reflecting the original service design, and were not formally required to refer patients.

Pilot Duration

The Pharmacy First Uncomplicated UTI Pilot Service operated from **July 2021 to December 2021**.