

Pharmacy in Schools Programme

The Pharmacy in Schools Programme was developed to support **health literacy and medicines awareness among primary school-aged children**. The programme aims to improve understanding of common illnesses, self-care, the safe use of medicines and the role of community pharmacy, supporting children to develop knowledge and life skills that contribute to healthier behaviours.

The programme also promotes awareness of how community pharmacy services can be used to manage common childhood conditions, including colds, diarrhoea, hay fever and head lice.

Programme Overview

The programme was developed by **Belfast Healthy Cities**, in partnership with the **Department of Health** and the **Department of Education**. It is delivered within **primary school settings for Primary 1–7 pupils** and aligns with the **Northern Ireland Curriculum**, including *Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU)* and *The World Around Us*.

The programme uses a **health literacy approach**, supported by interactive, age-appropriate resources designed for classroom delivery and engagement with pupils. Materials include structured lesson plans and activities that can be adapted to suit different school contexts.

Evaluation Overview

The **Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre (MOIC)** was commissioned to conduct an **independent evaluation** of the programme between **November 2023 and March 2025**.

The evaluation used a **mixed-methods approach**, including:

- Teacher **pre- and post-programme questionnaires**
- **Facilitated workshops** with participating teachers
- Qualitative feedback on delivery, impact and sustainability

Findings are based on **teacher-reported outcomes and evaluation data**, rather than direct measurement of outcomes in pupils.

Key Findings

Teacher confidence and curriculum alignment

The evaluation found increased teacher confidence in delivering content related to medicines use, self-care and the role of community pharmacy.

Teachers reported strong alignment with curriculum requirements and highlighted the programme's ease of use, clear structure and relevance to existing learning frameworks.

Pupil engagement and learning

Teachers reported high levels of pupil engagement and indicated that the programme supported children's understanding of medicines safety, self-care and when to seek help.

These findings reflect **teacher-reported improvements in pupil understanding**, as no validated tool was available to directly measure changes in children's health literacy.

Implementation learning and development opportunities

The evaluation identified a number of considerations to support future development, including:

- Timing of delivery within the school year
- Adaptation of resources to support pupils with **special educational needs (SEN)**
- Opportunities to strengthen links with community pharmacy and wider engagement with families

Clinical and System Context

Teachers identified potential wider benefits of the programme, including improved awareness among families, greater understanding of the role of community pharmacy and more appropriate use of healthcare services.

These findings reflect **perceived potential impact**, rather than measured system-level outcomes.

Achievement of Programme Objectives

The programme contributed to increasing awareness of self-care, medicines safety and the role of community pharmacy within primary school settings.

The evaluation provided evidence to support further development of the programme and highlighted its potential to contribute to improved health literacy through early education.

Partners Involved

The programme is delivered in partnership with:

- **Belfast Healthy Cities**
- **Department of Health (Northern Ireland)**
- **Department of Education (Northern Ireland)**
- **Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre (MOIC)** – independent evaluation

Programme Duration

The Pharmacy in Schools Programme was established in **2021**.

MOIC's independent evaluation was conducted between **November 2023 and March 2025**.