

Submitted to Public Service Reform: Pre-budget scrutiny 2027-28  
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## About you

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### How your response will be published

I would like my response to be published in its entirety

### What is your name?

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### Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

## Organisation details

### Name of organisation

Name of organisation:  
Royal College of Pharmacy

### Information about your organisation

Please add information about your organisation in the box below:

We are the Royal College of Pharmacy, the professional leadership body for pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists.

As the third largest workforce in healthcare, pharmacy plays a vital role in the health system, and as experts in medicines, pharmacists and their teams are central to patient care and public health. Our mission is to put pharmacy at the forefront of patient care, advancing the safe and effective use of medicines to the benefit of patients and the public.

We drive excellence in practice by providing expert leadership and support to our members and the wider pharmacy community, developing professional standards and guidance, advancing pharmacy through policy development and advocacy and supporting professional development and patient safety through assurance, credentialing and learning resources. We champion pharmacy across Great Britain and internationally, with a vision to be the world leader in the safe and effective use of medicines.

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### a) To what extent are these savings achievable, and how will they shape public service delivery?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

In our vision for Pharmacy 2030, the Royal College of Pharmacy (RCPharm) outlined the future of pharmacy practice in Scotland where pharmacists, as experts in medicines, improve people's health through medicines leadership and person-centred care. The enablers of this future include integration of health and care across traditional boundaries, utilising a modern digital and data infrastructure and optimising the role of pharmacy professionals in every sector of practice. The principles laid out within that vision emulate those within the Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework in Scotland and will support the redesign of public services (our focus on health and care services). Efficiency savings can be achieved through redesigning services, not simply reducing resources.

### b) What progress is being made towards achieving these efficiencies?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

Progress is slow. Workstreams such as the Digital Prescribing and Dispensing Pathway (to modernise the generation and handling of paper prescriptions) and delivery of a shared, integrated digital health record require a much faster pace to ensure that the end product keeps pace with the digitally enabled health and care system which is developing. There is an urgency to the delivery of these workstreams to support the reforms which the Scottish Government aspires to achieve for the people of Scotland.

c) What are the barriers to achieving greater efficiency and how can these be addressed?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

To enable the pharmacy profession to fully contribute to improving the health of the people of Scotland, the RCPHarm would like to see the expeditious development and deployment of an integrated, digital health record that is accessible for all health care professionals to read and write to. This would improve integration of health and care delivery across care boundaries and accelerate the impact of pharmacist prescribers on access to care. Reforms to pharmacist initial education and training means that from this year, 2026, new pharmacist registrants are qualified to prescribe without additional post-graduate education and training. Supported by pharmacy technicians and wider pharmacy support staff, pharmacy teams across community, primary and secondary care will contribute to health service reform through the redesign of patient pathways, improving access to care, optimising therapeutic outcomes from prescribing and managing the introduction of new medicines and therapies including personalised medicine. Further benefits could be generated through expansion of nationally-co-ordinated Once for Scotland models for infrastructure; and actions to address the climate emergency such as reduction of waste.

2 How should the Scottish Government best present the extent of any realised efficiencies in the annual budget publication, including providing clarity on whether these are expected to be recurring savings?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

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a) To what extent is this target achievable and how will it shape public service delivery?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

Public Service Reform will have a direct impact on the factors affecting the health of the population. Public Health Scotland, in their 10-year strategy "Together we can" outlined that the impact of ill health is set to rise 21% from 2023 to 2043. Simply reducing the public sector workforce will not address this projection and may widen the healthy aging gap between the wealthiest and those who come from poorer neighbourhoods. Productivity gains and efficiencies should come from workforce development and pathway redesign. Pharmacists across all sectors of practice, when integrated into multi-professional or multi-agency teams, can take on medicines leadership, prescribing and care responsibilities. In-depth workforce planning building on the work of the National Pharmacy Workforce Forum is vital to ensure that the pharmacy workforce can optimise their impact on the Scotland's health. Workforce reductions should not be pursued until digital transformation service efficiencies are proven and embedded. Reducing workforce prematurely risks increased workload, workforce burnout, poorer retention and recruitment challenges.

b) What progress is being made towards achieving this target?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

4 What actions can the Scottish Government take to ensure these workforce reductions are delivered in a managed way which best supports effective government and public service delivery?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

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5 The PSR strategy states that it will protect frontline services. To what extent is there sufficient clarity about how frontline roles are defined and how efficiencies in back-office functions can be delivered in a way that minimises impact on the delivery of public services?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

There is insufficient clarity on how frontline roles and services are defined in the PSR strategy. The commitment to engaging with public sector staff who work on the frontline is welcome, however, there is little detail on how that conversation will take place to ensure meaningful engagement and ongoing contributions.

From a pharmacy perspective, the RCPHarm would like to see acceptance that pharmacists in all sectors of practice are frontline clinicians and not support service staff. We want to see pharmacists and pharmacy teams included in early conversations on the journey to Public Sector Reform and not be brought in later when it has been identified that medicines may be implicated in proposals and retro-fitted adaptation is required.

Vital functions associated with medicines leadership and governance activities have historically been seen as back-office activities and may be deprioritised when focus is given to frontline services. Definitions of front-line services should include all those in relation to the high-quality, safe and cost-effective use of medicines including clinical pharmacy and patient-focussed functions such as procurement, dispensing and prescribing analysis. Reform efforts should place greater emphasis on value-based services, supported by meaningful public involvement and strong government leadership. In a context of increasing demand and constrained resources, there is a need to prioritise activities that demonstrably improve outcomes and deliver value, enabling resources to be focused where they can have the greatest impact. The programme of work under Value Based Health & Care: Realistic Medicine is one example of this approach. (Value Based Health & Care – Realistic Medicine)

6 Beyond the financial benefits that the Public Sector Reform (PSR) Strategy aims to achieve, what are the key outcomes that reform should be aiming for?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

With a lens on health and social care, the RCPHarm sees better patient outcomes, reduced health inequalities and improved access to care as key outcomes from Public Sector Reform. In addition, alternatives to hospital admission, safer medicines use and person-centred integrated care are all possible benefits. From a workforce perspective, service redesign and reimagined patient pathways could optimise the contribution of all healthcare professionals, including pharmacists, leading to greater workforce satisfaction, improved retention and better care.

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a) What should the Scottish Government's priorities be under its simplification workstream and what level of savings can be achieved through this approach?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

Improving interoperability and digital records across all aspects of health and social care.  
Improving access to and uptake of vaccination programmes and disease screening as a preventative approach.  
Introduce a stronger health and wellbeing curriculum in schools to support population health improvement.

b) What progress has been made to date with preventative budgeting?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

Pharmacy-related examples of preventative investment include early intervention through Pharmacy First and Pharmacy First Plus, which support the management of common clinical conditions. More than one-third of Scotland's population uses the Pharmacy First Scotland service through community pharmacies each year.

c) How should the forthcoming Budget support greater progress towards preventative budgeting across the devolved public sector? Please set out any barriers and how these can be addressed.

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

The Scottish Government's commitment to introducing Heart and Lung MOTs reflects the type of preventative, population-health approach that public service reform should accelerate. Delivering this ambition at scale could help identify risk earlier, reduce avoidable illness and support more sustainable health services in the long term.

d) What changes to the Scottish Government's approach to budget-setting are needed to effectively deliver public service reform?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

To expedite the Scottish Government ambitions on digital health and care, multi-year funding for digital transformation is key. Consideration of the additional costs of delivery of care in remote, rural and island communities is essential for future planning.

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a) To what extent is the Invest to Save Fund delivering projects that achieve ongoing savings?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

b) How are successful outcomes from this Fund being shared more widely across the public sector?

Please provide your response in the box provided.: