

# Budget 2021: Irish Pharmacy Union Reaction

- Healthcare spending must increase in communities as well as hospitals

**13 October 2020:** The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) which represents over 2,200 pharmacists across the country, has welcomed the increase in healthcare spending but said it must be delivered in communities as well as hospitals. Speaking following the announcement of Budget 2021, IPU Secretary General Darragh O’Loughlin said “Today we heard details of an unprecedented €4 billion spending increase in healthcare. This has potential to do a huge amount of good, not only in dealing with the current crisis, but also responding to future healthcare needs. However, while any increase in healthcare spending is welcome the government must do more than pour money into the hospital system while paying only lip service to primary and community-based care. “The COVID crisis has shown us the importance of increasing capacity in our hospitals. Doing this effectively requires more than just adding beds. We must also improve the care we can deliver in local communities, care which comes without the complexity and expense of hospitals. Indeed, a move to innovative community care was briefly mentioned during today’s budget speech. However, given this is at the heart of Sláintecare, it is disappointing that it appears to be largely overlooked yet again. “The Irish Pharmacy Union had called on the government to think innovatively and realise some of the health efficiencies that pharmacies could deliver. Unfortunately, today’s budget appears to lack any such innovation and is therefore a major missed opportunity. “The IPU has consistently called for the introduction of a pharmacy-based chronic disease management programme and a minor ailment scheme. Both have been proven to work well in other countries, improving patients’ access to healthcare and reducing the burden on GPs and hospitals. This is just two of many examples of how pharmacies can improve our health service. We hope that as more detailed expenditure plans from the Department of Health are compiled, they will realise this potential.” **ENDS**