

## Budget 2022: Irish Pharmacy Union Reaction



12 October 2021 - **The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU)**, which represents over 1,900 community pharmacies across the country, has welcomed the introduction of a free contraception scheme but said Budget 2022 has missed an opportunity by failing to commit to further expanded pharmacy services including a pharmacy based Minor Ailments Scheme.

Speaking following the announcement of Budget 2022, IPU President and community pharmacist, Dermot Twomey said:

“Pharmacies have campaigned for the introduction of free contraception for many years. We welcome that this will now commence, initially providing access to women aged 17 to 25. However, it is essential that this service is available directly from pharmacies and without a requirement for prescriptions. Enhancing access in this way would improve uptake and eliminate GP visits that there is no clinical need for.

“The changes to the Drug Payment Scheme, reducing the maximum monthly amount any family will have to pay in medication costs to €100 per month is good news for families who require ongoing and regular medication. This will deliver a meaningful change, reducing the annual costs of medication bills by €168. The IPU continue to call for the elimination of the Prescription Levy for medical card patients which acts as a barrier to some of the most vulnerable members of our society accessing medication.

“While the Government is to be commended for continuing to commit to healthcare spending, it is lamentable that this remains too focussed on the acute hospital system. The IPU has consistently called for the introduction of a Minor Ailment Scheme which has proven to work

extremely well in a number of other countries. At a time when free GP care to children is being extended, adding further to their waiting lists, this scheme has the potential to dramatically reduce the number of unnecessary GP visits while also improving patients' access to healthcare."

Mr Twomey concluded by calling on government to support a meaningful expansion of pharmacy services: "With 78 million patient visits per year, the pharmacy sector is already the most accessed part of the health system. But there is a capacity and willingness to do far more for patients. Right now, as plans are put in place for the future of healthcare post COVID-19 we have a once in a generation chance to get things right. This must involve a meaningful expansion of properly resourced pharmacy services."

**Ends**