

Government urged to facilitate more comprehensive pharmacy services

- **Evidence shows introducing new pharmacy services leads to positive patient outcomes**
- **One third of people say pharmacist more important during the pandemic**
- **Programme for Government commits to more comprehensive pharmacy services**

Irish community pharmacists are calling on the Government to implement commitments made in the Programme for Government and modernise the health service by providing for comprehensive pharmacy services. Pharmacists can do more, and want to, and public attitudes consistently show strong support for pharmacy. The ongoing pandemic has shown the vital role pharmacists play, as evidenced by a recent Behaviours & Attitudes (B&A) survey in which 30% of people stated that their pharmacist has become more important to them since the COVID-19 outbreak began, especially now that face-to-face access to GPs is, understandably, so much more difficult. In June, the IPSOS veracity index showed 96% public trust in pharmacists, second only to nurses and ahead of all other professions. This was further reinforced by the recent Customer Experience Ireland 2020 Report, which highlighted that pharmacies are among those sectors that provide the highest level of customer service and experience. IPU Secretary General Darragh O'Loughlin said, "Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, community pharmacists have supported their communities by staying open and continuing to provide a vital healthcare service at a local level when it was most needed, with little or no additional support from the State. The last nine months have demonstrated the pivotal role that community pharmacies play, often plugging the gaps in healthcare services in local communities. Community pharmacists are now urging Government to deliver on their promise and not to miss the opportunity that now exists to provide comprehensive pharmacy services as part of reforming and modernising healthcare in Ireland." Mr O'Loughlin continued, "The pandemic pushed forward reforms that we have long been calling for and they have worked really well, as evidenced in recent surveys. For example, the B&A survey results show that among the top things people consulted their pharmacist on during the pandemic were repeat prescriptions. Earlier this year, a new measure was introduced whereby pharmacists can now repeat existing prescriptions where appropriate for individual patients extend and extend the validity from 6 months to 9 months. Pharmacists have been calling for years for measures like this to be introduced, and the public have responded wholeheartedly when they are. "Similarly, the B&A survey showed that 10% of those who consulted with their pharmacist during the pandemic did so about

minor ailments, for example eye infections or first aid. This shows the need for a Minor Ailment Scheme as is already available in neighbouring jurisdictions, which again pharmacists have been seeking for many years, as it is in the public good. The pharmacy profession has proven time and again that when we are empowered with new responsibilities it results in positive outcomes for patients and the health system as a whole. Mr O’Loughlin concluded, “Pharmacists are calling on the Government to urgently act on the commitments in the Programme for Government to enhance the role of pharmacists in the delivery of healthcare in the community. Now more than ever before, we need to look at ways of reforming and modernising healthcare. Pharmacists are a key part of the solution.”