

IPU Welcome Establishment of Pharmacy Taskforce



23 July 2023 The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has welcomed the announcement by Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, of the establishment of an Expert Taskforce to support the expansion of the role of pharmacists in Irish healthcare. The move could deliver a revolution in community care, according to the IPU, who are urging that recommendations are implemented without delay.

The IPU has been campaigning for several years for an expansion in the role of Irish community pharmacies. This has included a range of recommendations to deliver enhanced patient care from the convenience of local pharmacies. However, the IPU has also warned that significant underfunding of the sector will need to be addressed to empower this expansion.

Welcoming today's announcement Derek Reilly, interim Secretary General of the IPU said, "Community pharmacies are ready, willing, and able to do more for their patients. We warmly welcome the establishment of this taskforce, which will undoubtedly identify many opportunities to improve healthcare in our communities.

“The Irish public already deeply value the role of their pharmacist, and the pharmacy network is the most accessed and accessible aspect of our health system. Expanding the profession’s role will allow our 1,900 community pharmacies to function at the very heart of the healthcare system.”

Mr Reilly has however warned that fees paid to pharmacists, which are lower now than they were in 2009, will need to be addressed as a priority. “The Pharmacy profession had to endure substantial fee cuts during the recession and remains the only healthcare profession who has not had fees restored. For each medicine dispensed on behalf of the state the fees received today are 24% lower than 14 years ago, while costs continue to rise. While this review of services is welcome, it cannot be done in isolation without reviewing the funding of pharmacies.”

Concluding IPU interim Secretary General Derek Reilly said, “We look forward to engaging constructively with the taskforce, with a focus on how the profession can play a greater role on patient care. We hope that all subsequent recommendations are implemented without delay.”

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