

## Statement from the IPU

- Examinership of Pharmacy Group shows Sector in Crisis

- **Lack of Government Support Leading to Pharmacy Casualties**

**4 September 2020:** The announcement today that the Cara Pharmacy Group has entered examinership highlights the unsustainable financial pressures on the community pharmacy sector, according to the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU). The pharmacy sector suffered deep cuts in funding imposed during the financial crisis a decade ago and which, despite repeated government commitments, have not been reversed. The increasing financial pressure has already resulted in a number of prominent pharmacy insolvencies, with several pharmacy businesses entering examinership or being taken over by their creditors or suppliers. According to IPU Secretary General Darragh O’Loughlin, “Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic pharmacies have kept their doors open to ensure the supply of medicine, and healthcare services have continued in every community across the country. However, staying open has come at a significant cost to those pharmacies. All of them had to invest significantly to put in place measures to keep staff and patients safe, putting huge pressure on pharmacy businesses. It is a worrying time for the staff of Cara Pharmacy Group and those across the sector. Unfortunately, many pharmacies have laid staff off, and many more may be forced to do so.” Recent research by the IPU found that it is costing the pharmacy sector over €10 million a month to remain open and to provide safe care. In addition, pharmacies have reported retail sales falling by an average of 36% since the start of the crisis. One in five pharmacies has laid off staff, while another two in five (38%) indicated they would have to do so over the next few months. Mr O’Loughlin continued, “Ongoing deep cuts in funding over the last decade, together with the impact of COVID-19, have taken a heavy toll and pharmacy finances are now in critical condition, with the pressure on the sector becoming increasingly intolerable. This is compounded by the fact that, despite huge additional investment in health services and substantial additional resources for other health professions, pharmacists have received little or no direct financial support from the Government for remaining open and accessible to patients and the public.” In conclusion Mr O’ Loughlin said, “Today’s events should act as a warning call to the Government that, unless previous cuts are reversed and adequate resources are invested in pharmacy services, other cases similar to what happened today with the Cara Pharmacy Group will become inevitable, potentially depriving local communities of their last truly accessible healthcare service provider.” **ENDS**