

Pharmacy at risk in plans to cut funding

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The only pharmacy in Pateley Bridge could be forced to cut staff and services if changes to Government funding go ahead.

Pateley Bridge Pharmacy customers may have to travel to Ripon or Grassington if £170m in NHS cash paid to run chemists in England is removed.

Samina Khan, who has been a pharmacist in Pateley Bridge for more than eight years, said: "The Government needs to understand pharmacies like Pateley Bridge are an important aspect of the community and funding should not be cut.

"If they cut funding it's taking away the wages of members of staff.

"I'm hoping we won't close but there is a risk of job cuts and services being cut - for example, we go out and visit patients in hospital.

"Quite a lot of our patients are elderly or live on their own and we can be their first port

of call. We have built a strong relationship with them by supporting them in times of need."

She said other businesses in the town had asked for copies of a petition to hand out to their customers, concerned that there would be a knock-on effect if services at the prominent High Street pharmacy were cut back.

The petition has received around 1,500 signatures locally and can be found at Pateley Bridge Pharmacy or online at www.supportyourlocalpharmacy.org.

Jack Davies, chief executive of Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire, which represents all NHS pharmacy contractors, estimated that 2,500-3,000 pharmacies across the country could be affected by the cuts.

He said the Government's changes were similar to the recently scrapped proposals to force all schools to become academies.

"It is mostly small pharmacies that will be affected.



Richard Corbett MEP and pharmacist Samina Khan at Pateley Bridge Pharmacy oppose Government plans to cut funding.

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LUCKY DIP PARTY

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trial

Enthusiasts host the dales



eshire Dales Classic Trial. Picture by Jack Knoop.

(MG), 3 Aaron and David Haizelden - Exeter (Reliant), 3 Jonathan Toulman/Patricia Barbara - Stratford (Suzuki).

Class 4: 1 Sam and Mick Holmes - Derby (VW Beetle), 2 Myke and Josi Peacock - Carlisle (Skoda).

Class 3: 1 Nigel Hilling/Ray Morrill - Huddersfield (Ford Anglia), 2 Sticker Martin/Amanda Blay - Barnstaple, Ford Escort).

Class 2: Bill and Liz Bennett - Chipping Sodbury (MG), Joe Stollery/Jenny Eaves - Suffolk (Wolseley).

Class 1: John Heppenstall/Nicholas Thornber - Elland (Peugeot).

Class V: 1 Gareth Frank/John Tillet - Bedale (Lea Francis), 2 Keith Dobinson/Alan Bee - Newton Aycliffe (Austin 7), 3 Robert Welch/Jack Holden - Leeds.

Funding cuts



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"In some cases opening it up to markets will be viable but Samina will have to decide if it's financially viable or not."

Local pharmacies rely on the NHS for 90 per cent of their income, receiving an average of £220,000, mainly through fees for handling prescriptions.

The Department of Health said it was "consulting on proposals for a more efficient, integrated, innovative system that reflects patients' expectations".

The consultation on the reforms ends on Tuesday.

Backing the campaign

Richard Corbett MEP, who visited Pateley Bridge Pharmacy on Tuesday, said: "Some pharmacies will survive, with difficulties, but those like Pateley Bridge may be forced to close."

"Some cuts will end up costing doctors surgeries and other parts of the NHS, while others costs will be passed on to customers in terms of travel - it's a false saving."

"Even if Pateley Bridge customers had to travel to Grassington or Harrogate those pharmacies are also likely to be affected."

The changes could come into effect by October but campaigners are hoping for a stay of execution.