Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

Further to that point, the Minister knows that our pharmacists are a highly skilled and professional resource that has long been underused in the NHS. He has mentioned the ongoing Murray review, and a sustainability and transformation plan process is also going on around the country. My concern is that the closures will come about in a random way, rather than through a planned process based on identifying skills in particular areas. Will he consider delaying them until we have all the reports in place and we can consider the matter on an area-by-area basis?

David Mowat The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health

The access scheme is the device that will ensure that pharmacies are not closed in a random way. I want to address the point about closures head on. It is my belief that there will be a minimal amount of closures. The impact analysis talks about 100 and it models 100. The average pharmacy has a margin of 15%, and the amount of efficiency savings that we are asking pharmacies to make over two years is 7%. In addition, the average pharmacy is trading for Â£750,000 when it closes or merges, even after we announced these efficiency savings a year ago. That value is being retained.

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