



COVID-19 Update

Sunday 22nd March 2020

This update contains important information for community pharmacy teams about the Government's response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus in the UK. PSNC is working with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide as much support and guidance as possible to help community pharmacy teams contribute to some of the many challenges that could arise in an epidemic situation. This email is one of a series expected to be sent in the coming months to manage the potential spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 Update: SOP, delivery service and CPCS referrals

The following updates were issued on Sunday 22nd March 2020.

Updated SOP and Opening Hours Flexibility

NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) have issued an updated Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for community pharmacies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Critically, the SOP gives pharmacies some flexibility in the hours in which they need to open to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PSNC, CCA, NPA and AIM welcome the revised SOP and the flexibility that this gives to contractors.

The changes should help to ensure that pharmacies can stay open to the public, and that staff can work safely and are not fatigued by the current high workload and pressures associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. Pharmacy contractors are encouraged to make use of the provisions to support their staff.

The pharmacy organisations are working together on detailed guidance for contractors to help them to implement this new SOP.

[Learn more about the opening hours flexibility and temporary closures, plus read the SOP in full, here.](#)

Medicines Delivery Service

HM Government and the NHS are to ask around 1.5 million people who are at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 infection to stay at home for a period of 12 weeks. This process is being described as 'shielding' and people identified in the categories of patients that the Government would like to be shielded will receive a letter from the NHS in the next few days which says that the government is helping pharmacies to deliver prescriptions to them.

PSNC is currently concluding discussions with NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) about a new national community pharmacy medicines delivery service to support this group of shielded patients.

We will issue full guidance to contractors as soon as we are able to and we anticipate the service will commence in the next few days. For the moment, we can tell you that:

- This will be a service commissioned nationally by NHSE&I, with associated changes to the Terms of Service for all pharmacies;
- As noted in the letter to shielded patients, they will be asked in the first instance to have their medicines collected and delivered to them by friends, family or a volunteer, rather than being directed straight to the pharmacy provided delivery service;
- Patients will be able to ask for support from volunteers, who are part of a national volunteer network which is being mobilised in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Contractors will also be able to request support from volunteers to undertake deliveries of prescriptions to any patient, not just those that are being shielded.

[Learn more about the delivery service here.](#)

NHS 111 Online CPCS Referrals

From this weekend, the NHS 111 Online service will be making Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) referrals to community pharmacies where people need urgent access to their usual prescribed medicines.

Whilst successfully piloted in the north west of England, plans to roll out the functionality across the whole of England have been brought forward in response to the huge surge in demand for NHS 111 services and the direction for people to use the online service in the first instance.

For contractors and their teams, the CPCS consultation should be conducted in the normal way, as the source of the referral – NHS 111 telephony service or NHS 111 Online – makes no difference to the process which the pharmacist needs to follow with the patient.

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Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee



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