



COVID-19 Update

Thursday 2nd April 2020

This new, daily update contains important information for community pharmacy teams about the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In today's update: Easter opening negotiation, urgent supplies, update PPE guidance, helping other care workers, delivery training

Easter Opening Hours

Yesterday we informed contractors that NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) are suggesting that pharmacies may need to be open for at least some time on Good Friday and Easter Monday as part of the wider NHS response to the pandemic.

We are still waiting for urgent confirmation from NHSE&I about this matter and have stressed the need for a quick decision.

PSNC had previously explained to policymakers that the current planned Easter provision (with several thousand pharmacies opening) is sufficient for the estimated workload. We also feel that pharmacy teams need this time to recover for the next phase of the outbreak. But there are other issues for the decision-makers to consider – including wanting the NHS open on these days for medicine supplies, to support GPs and provide public reassurance at a time when there may be a surge in COVID-19 cases.

We will issue further information to contractors as soon as we have it, and if pharmacies are required to open for extra hours over Easter, we will be seeking funding for this.

Urgent Medicine Supplies

The COVID-19 pandemic is increasing the number of requests patients are making to pharmacies for emergency supplies of medicines. Where appropriate, these requests may be dealt with via a patient funded emergency supply, a referral to their general practice or the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS).

Pharmacists who receive requests from a patient for an emergency supply or CPCS referrals for urgent supplies should use their professional judgement to determine whether an emergency supply is appropriate and legal to make.

[Read PSNC's advice on urgent medicines supplies for Controlled Drugs](#)

Funding for Protective Screens etc.

NHSE&I announced earlier this week that they will make a £300 payment to all pharmacies, except distance-selling pharmacies, to support the installation of bollards, physical barriers or screens. PSNC has received clarification that this funding comes from outside the global sum. The payment will be made automatically by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) and it is expected to be made with a pharmacy's usual payment due on 1st May 2020.

Updated PPE guidance

Public Health England's (PHE) [guidance on the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) now recommends use of masks in pharmacies when working in an area with possible or confirmed cases and where pharmacy teams are unable to maintain 2 metres social distance. Despite advice to patients with COVID-19 symptoms that they should stay away from pharmacies, some people are not following that guidance and pharmacy team members are potentially being exposed to possible or confirmed cases.

The revised guidance is in line with a request made by PSNC and we have asked DHSC and NHSE&I to ensure that more masks will be supplied by PHE to contractors in the next few days.

It is important to note that while pharmacy staff may now choose to wear masks in line with the revised guidance, it is imperative that social distancing and self-isolation, where appropriate continue to be practised and hygiene measures, such as regular hand washing, continue to be followed.

Helping Other Healthcare Workers

Many community pharmacies report that in order to allow the 2m social distancing in their premises they are having to limit the numbers of people coming in at any one time. Some pharmacies are managing these queues, finding out who is in them and what medicines they need so that the team inside can try to be ready for each customer.

As part of this, pharmacy could assist fellow healthcare workers by allowing them to bypass the usual queue when coming to collect medicines. Given the valuable role that healthcare professionals are playing in the response to COVID-19, it is important that healthcare professionals support one another to help minimise their risk of contracting the virus.

Delivery Driver Training

A free short training course has been designed by Buttercups Training for those who may be required to help with the delivery of medicines to patients. Content includes an overview of COVID-19 with its symptoms, storage of medicines in transit, vehicle security, safe delivery and dealing with undelivered medicines. The short course is available from the [Buttercups website](#).

Keep up-to-date with our hub page: psnc.org.uk/coronavirus

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