



COVID-19 Update

Monday 20th 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: testing for pharmacy staff; community pharmacists support new Clinical Assessment Service; weekly news and guidance updates

Update on COVID-19 testing for pharmacy staff

In Friday's email, we provided an update on the national COVID-19 testing programme for frontline staff, including community pharmacy team members.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) had announced that an online portal developed by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will be used to allow health and care staff, including community pharmacy staff, to book a test at one of the national test centres.

Testing will allow those currently unable to return to work because they or a member of their family or household have symptoms of coronavirus to know whether they do have the virus.

On Saturday 18th April 2020, pharmacy contractors were sent details on how their staff can access testing, in an email sent by the NHS Business Services Authority to the NHSmail shared mailbox of each community pharmacy in England. The email contained a link to an invitation template which can be given to employees needing testing. This document contains the link to the CQC online portal, which employees will need so they can request a test.

Visit our [Staff wellbeing and COVID-19 testing page](#) for further information.

Community pharmacists support new Clinical Assessment Service

To support the NHS 111 response to the pandemic, a Pharmacy Clinical Assessment Service (CAS) has been established, which is working alongside the national COVID-19 CAS, which is being manned by doctors and nurses.

The service went live on 16th April 2020 and will operate from 8am to 8pm 7 days a week, staffed by a team of pharmacists, including some community pharmacists who have volunteered to be redeployed to this role, where for example their pharmacy has been closed due to the pandemic. Returning pharmacists, i.e. those who have left the NHS and have volunteered to return are also part of the team answering calls from patients.

The case mix of calls for the Pharmacy CAS has been adapted from the minor illness symptom groups that community pharmacy would normally deal with and the calls that would normally be handled by pharmacists in Integrated Urgent Care CAS, which already work with NHS 111 services across the country.

Patients with declared Coronavirus symptoms will be assessed by clinicians through the COVID-19 CAS who may then transfer patients direct to a pharmacist for specific medicines advice to support self-care.

Weekly key news and guidance updates

A reminder that, in addition to these daily email news updates, PSNC is also publishing [weekly COVID-19 round-ups](#). These round-ups are published every Monday and include all the key news and guidance from the previous week. The page is also linked to from our [COVID-19 hub](#).

With so much information being sent out at the moment in this fast-moving situation, we hope this new weekly series will help you to keep track of all the latest COVID-19 updates.

Have you seen our latest FAQs?

PSNC's COVID-19 hub has an [FAQs page](#) with a large number of answers to queries posed by pharmacy contractors, their teams and LPCs; these are being updated on an almost daily basis. Recent additions include:

Q. I am struggling to obtain generic medicines at a reasonable price, will I be adequately reimbursed?

PSNC is keeping a close eye on the generic medicines affected by recent price hikes and is in discussions with DHSC on protection for pharmacies against sudden price rises. Where purchase prices are reported to be above the listed Drug Tariff prices, PSNC continues to make applications to DHSC for price concessions in the usual way. PSNC relies on contractor reports to make its application and we urge contractors to get in touch with us to report any supply issues by using the [online reporting form](#) to give us an accurate picture of developing issues.

Q. Is PSNC making effective use of the LPC network?

LPCs are feeding local intelligence from their contractors into PSNC to support our discussions with HM Government and they are tackling local matters such as communication with local GP representatives. Richard Brown, CEO of Avon LPC, has joined the PSNC team on a part-time basis to support collaborative working and communication between PSNC and LPCs. A COVID-19 Rapid Action Team comprising an LPC Chief Officer from each PSNC region in England has been formed to support this work. The group meets twice a week to capture ideas, feedback and questions from the field, plus gathering case studies on how community pharmacy teams are dealing with the pandemic.

[Find answers to more of your questions here](#)

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

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