



COVID-19 Update

Friday 24th 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: NHSE&I intentions for 8th May; COVID-19 related payments; call for removal of prescription charge; patient facing information; Primary Care Bulletin

NHSE&I intentions for Friday 8th May Bank Holiday

In today's (24th April 2020) COVID-19 Primary Care Bulletin email, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) confirmed its expectations for community pharmacy opening on the next bank holiday, Friday 8th May.

The key messages in the bulletin were:

- All community pharmacy open 2-5pm, with any exceptions agreed in advance with NHSE&I regional teams.
- Planned community pharmacy bank holiday cover to proceed unless otherwise agreed with NHSE&I regional teams.

As before, PSNC will be pressing for funding to cover the additional costs that opening for additional hours – at short notice and on a bank holiday – will bring for contractors who are already struggling to make ends meet through this public health crisis.

A formal NHSE&I announcement, agreed by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, is expected to be issued early next week.

COVID-19 related payment guide

PSNC has made representations to Government about the immense pressure pharmacies are under and the need for an urgent funding injection to the sector to ease cashflow. In the meantime, some payment adjustments have been implemented for the required Easter bank holiday opening hours, the Pandemic Delivery Service and the installation of protective barriers. We have produced a guide outlining how and when the payments announced so far will be made.

[**View our payment guide**](#)

Bodies Call for Temporary Removal of the Prescription Charge

PSNC, the British Medical Association (BMA) and Dispensing Doctors Association (DDA) have written to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, to highlight some of the challenges and risks faced by those dispensing and accessing prescriptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a joint letter, the three representative bodies have urged Mr Hancock to take action to reduce these risks and have recommended the introduction of a temporary removal of the prescription charge altogether to allow for a smoother and safer prescription procedure for all. Whilst recognising the Government's intention to extend the period of validity for exemption certificates as a positive step, this alone is not enough to significantly protect patients and frontline staff and is greatly undermined if patients continue to have to pay to access their prescription.

[Read the letter to Matt Hancock from BMA, DDA and PSNC](#)

Patient Facing Information for Pharmacies

New public-facing digital resources are now available for pharmacies to use on social media and in-pharmacy screens. The images are intended to help reinforce the following messages to the public:

- Don't enter your local pharmacy if you or anyone you live with has coronavirus symptoms;
- There's no need to order extra medicines; and
- Pharmacies are having to make changes to allow them to stay open during the pandemic.

[Download the new digital resources](#)

NHSE&I has also updated a number of pharmacy-related NHS website pages to reflect feedback from community pharmacy in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Daily NHSE&I Bulletin

NHSE&I are also issuing a daily COVID-19 Primary Care Bulletin, which includes a specific section for community pharmacy updates. PSNC recommends that contractors register to receive these important updates.

[Sign up for the Primary Care Bulletin](#)

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. During the pandemic, do we still need to get the patient to sign a paper consent form for MUR and NMS?

Yes. The Secretary of State Directions require that all patients receiving the MUR service or NMS service must sign a consent form, so signing or making their mark on a consent form is required in all cases. PSNC is discussing with NHSE&I and DHSC moving to a verbal consent model for Advanced services, so the need for a signed paper consent form would be removed. If this is removed, PSNC will notify contractors; until then, paper consent forms must continue to be used.

Q. As MURs and NMS can't be done face-to-face at the moment, can we do them over the phone instead?

NMS can be conducted over the phone. MURs can also be provided exceptionally by telephone, but only where the local NHSE&I team gives its approval for a particular patient, and on a particular occasion. The Directions require a telephone MUR to be carried out such that no-one can overhear the consultation. Contractors can use [PSNC's PREM2 forms](#) to make applications to their local NHSE&I team for telephone MURs and off-site MURs.

Q. How do I dispose of used PPE?

In accordance with [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID19\) standard operating procedure](#) guidance issued by NHSE&I, waste such as PPE, used tissues and disposable cleaning cloths can be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely and quarantined for 72 hours before being put in your usual external waste bin.

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

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

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