



COVID-19 Update

Thursday 30th April 2020

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

In today's update: death in service benefits; medicines re-use guidance; CD regulations amended; digital guide to delivery service

Death in Service Benefits

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced a new life assurance scheme for healthcare workers on the frontline in England. The scheme aims to provide some financial protection for the families of those who die due to their exposure to coronavirus.

The Government stated that it will give bereaved family members a lump sum of £60,000, but the finer details of the scheme – such as how the payment can be claimed and when it will be given – are yet to be publicised.

Whilst not specifically named in the initial announcement, Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock has confirmed that community pharmacists are included in the scheme.

[Learn more about the announcement](#)

Medicines Re-use in Care Homes and Hospices

DHSC and NHS England and NHS Improvement have published [guidance on running a medicines re-use scheme in a care home or hospice setting](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidance/standard operating procedure (SOP) is intended to support timely access to essential prescribed medicines during the COVID-19 pandemic for patients who are being cared for in a care home or hospice setting in England. The document states that as there are increasing concerns about the pressure that could be placed on the medicines supply chain during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a medicines re-use scheme for care homes and hospices could potentially ease some of that pressure in the coming weeks.

It is those pharmacy teams that regularly supply medicines to care homes and hospices that are most likely to need to be aware of the operation of medicines re-use schemes.

[Learn more about community pharmacy's role](#)

CD Regulations Amended for Pandemic Supply

Today, changes to the [Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001](#) come into force to provide Ministers with emergency powers for the supply of Controlled Drugs (CDs) in specific circumstances during a pandemic, such as the COVID-19 outbreak. The regulations are enabling so may be used only if 'activated' by Ministers and apply in very limited circumstances.

There are three changes which are briefly: emergency supply of a CD without a prescription; emergency supply of a CD against a [Serious Shortage Protocol \(SSP\)](#); and an emergency change to a CD instalment direction with the agreement of the prescriber – all only apply during a pandemic and are subject to various conditions. PSNC will give more details of the legislative changes and conditions tomorrow.

New Pandemic Delivery Service Guide

PSNC has today published a digital guide to the Pandemic Delivery Service for community pharmacy contractors.

The 30-minute video features Alastair Buxton, PSNC's Director of NHS Services, walking contractors through both the changes to the terms of service and the new Advanced service. Alastair covers a number of key issues such as how to identify eligible patients and the use of volunteers, as well as outlining the funding available and how to claim payment.

[Watch the digital guide](#)

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. Are pharmacy staff eligible for testing, and if so, how is this accessed?

Yes, frontline workers, including community pharmacy staff in England, can access free testing for COVID-19, via the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) national testing service. 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.

A new portal for booking COVID-19 tests for key workers, including community pharmacy team members, is now available for use by team members and employers: [Essential workers: apply for a coronavirus test \(GOV.UK\)](#)

Q. How can PSNC become faster at dealing with price concession issues, especially now where there so many price increases and drug shortages?

PSNC are actively monitoring reports received of pricing over Tariff through the [pricing issues reporting tool](#) and continuing to receive these reports is essential to our work negotiating price concessions. Given the unprecedented situation pharmacy contractors and their staff are under, we have urged DHSC to exercise more flexibility in determining price concessions quickly and responsively given the number of drugs reported to have been affected by price hikes, updating our requests for lines to be considered throughout the month.

We have raised with DHSC the increased volume of lines being reported and the impact the pricing has on cashflow. Reports regarding shortages, through the new [shortage reporting tool](#) are highlighted to DHSC to investigate. [Our briefing details how the price concession system operates.](#)

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

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

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