



COVID-19 Update

Tuesday 7th 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: delivery service update; Easter opening clarification; access to PPE; NHSE&I webinar; SCR vulnerability flag; volunteers training

Update on COVID-19 Pandemic Medicines Delivery Service

Community pharmacy contractors may have seen news that from today the NHS Volunteer Responders are available to help the NHS in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. PSNC is still in active negotiations with NHSE&I and DHSC about their planned national community pharmacy medicines delivery service and in particular about how pharmacies will have to make use of the volunteer network to support this.

PSNC has been concerned that patient and medicines safety must be protected, and we have asked that pharmacies should only be required to use DBS-checked volunteers to deliver medicines. We are continuing to work through the negotiations to ensure that pharmacies do not face undue workload or liabilities as a result of this new service and the involvement of the volunteer network.

Contractors wishing to use volunteers for other roles should refer to the [NHSE&I guidance](#) on this matter. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has also issued [guidance on this topic](#), including the need for DBS checks for people delivering medicines to patients' homes.

PSNC Chief Executive Simon Dukes said: "The Pandemic Delivery Service is still under negotiation with NHSE&I. This is an incredibly frustrating process that has taken far longer than we wanted it to – the lack of clarity is extremely unhelpful for contractors who we know are facing increasing demands for deliveries from patients.

However, as we have raised in the national media today, PSNC does have some considerable concerns about the potential risks of using volunteers to deliver medicines to vulnerable people. We are continuing to work hard to find a way forward that allows pharmacies to work collaboratively with these volunteers, the vast majority of whom are selflessly offering their own time to support the NHS through this crisis, for the benefit of the NHS and patients."

[Read more about PSNC's concerns](#)

PSNC Highlights Concerns to National Media

PSNC Chief Executive Simon Dukes discussed the national medicines delivery service for shielded patients, raising concerns that current plans could leave vulnerable people at risk from fraudsters and potentially without their medicines. PSNC Committee Member Mark Burdon also spoke about the impact of the situation on his mental and physical health, as well as on his pharmacy's bank balance.

[Listen to the coverage on BBC Radio 4's Today programme](#)

PSNC Easter Working

Following the announcement that NHSE&I will require all community pharmacies in England to open from 2pm to 5pm on Good Friday and Easter Monday, the team at PSNC are treating these as normal working days and will be open to support community pharmacy contractors and their teams.

Easter Opening: Clarification on local flexibility

Further to its decision that all community pharmacies in England must open for three fixed hours on both April 10 (Good Friday) and April 13 (Easter Monday), NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) has clarified the ability of its Regional teams to operate some local flexibility.

In particular, as announced on Saturday, pharmacies can apply for an exemption to the requirement to open where there is minimal demand due to Government's social distancing policy.

In its COVID-19 Primary Care Bulletin email tonight (April 7), NHSE&I has clarified that regional teams would consider exceptions based on the needs of patients in the areas served and in view of the challenges for pharmacy staff.

Community pharmacies who believe there is no need for them to open on April 10 or 13 should seek an exemption from their NHSE&I regional team – LPCs may be able to support this. Reasons why there may be reduced patient need may include, for example, the closure of local GP practices or proximity of other local pharmacies who will be open. Contractors could also seek flexibility on the three hours in which they must be open (which has been set by NHSE&I nationally as 2pm to 5pm), for example if they are already due to be open in the morning to meet local need.

PSNC has confirmed that applications for exemptions must be made by contractors.

NHSE&I also stated that any pharmacy that was planning to open longer hours (in addition to the 2pm-5pm) should still do so to support access for patients through the day. Accordingly, any existing directions to open and agreed funding should stay in place, unless otherwise agreed by contractors and NHSE&I regional teams.

If a pharmacy is unable to open for reasons beyond the control of the contractor between 2pm and 5pm on April 10 or 13 they should notify their NHSE&I regional office, update the NHS 111 DoS and ensure their NHS website entry is correct.

NHSE&I has committed to provide funding for contractors for the Easter Bank Holiday openings but said last week that it would not apply Bank Holiday premiums. PSNC is continuing to try to change their view on this and to negotiate a reasonable funding rate that does take into account those premiums.

This clarification of increased flexibility is welcomed by PSNC and follows ongoing discussion with NHSE&I since the announcement was made on Friday.

[Read more including a statement from PSNC CEO, Simon Dukes](#)

NHSE&I Community Pharmacy Webinar

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Keith Ridge is inviting community pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to join him for the latest preparedness webinar for the sector. This week's guest is Dr Susan Hopkins, Public Health England's National Incident Director for COVID-19.

The webinar is **tomorrow night (Wednesday 8th April) at 7-8pm** and can be accessed via bit.ly/3bOqSwq. Due to the numbers involved, colleagues from community pharmacy will be unable to speak but comments and questions can be submitted via the chat function.

Pressing for Urgent Access to PPE

PSNC is continuing to press for community pharmacies to have urgent access to more of Public Health England's (PHE) stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This is essential for the protection of pharmacy teams, particularly in pharmacies where there is not room for team members to work 2 metres apart.

We have had numerous discussions with officials at DHSC and NHSE&I and they are continuing to work on this on behalf of the sector. We have also discussed it with Pharmacy Minister Jo Churchill MP. Today (April 7) we have also written to the Chief Executive of PHE, restating the urgent need for pharmacy teams to have access to appropriate PPE, as well as raising the matter with the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer who is supporting the sector on this.

Vulnerability Flag Added to SCR

NHS Digital have added a 'Vulnerability flag' to the NHS Summary Care Record (SCR) of patients who are on the **shielded patient list**. This enables community pharmacy teams using NHS Digital's SCRa portal to see an alert when viewing the SCR of such a patient.

The Vulnerability flag will support pharmacy teams' decision making about how to best support those people in the shielded group.

The flag went live on a pilot basis on Friday 3 April 2020. Although the flag will initially only be visible within the NHS Spine SCRa application, it is hoped that clinical and PMR system suppliers that enable pharmacy teams to benefit from the **SCR 1-click feature** will also be able to display this information in the future, following appropriate development.

[Find out how the SCR vulnerability alert works](#)

Training for Pharmacy Volunteers

Pharmacy training provider Mediapharm has produced free 'COVID-19 Quick Start Training for Volunteers'. This certificated course is for pharmacy contractors who are taking on volunteers during the COVID-19 emergency and who need to be trained and ready to work from day one. The course is accessible from the [Mediapharm website](#).

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

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