

PSNC Briefing 013/16: The EPS Service model

This PSNC Briefing provides pharmacy teams with information about the service model of the Electronic Prescription Service Release 2 (EPS R2). The EPS service model determines how issues are to be raised, dealt with, escalated (where needed) and resolved. The service model should also involve relevant parties, such as pharmacy system providers, performing root-cause analyses of incidents to prevent them from reoccurring in the future.

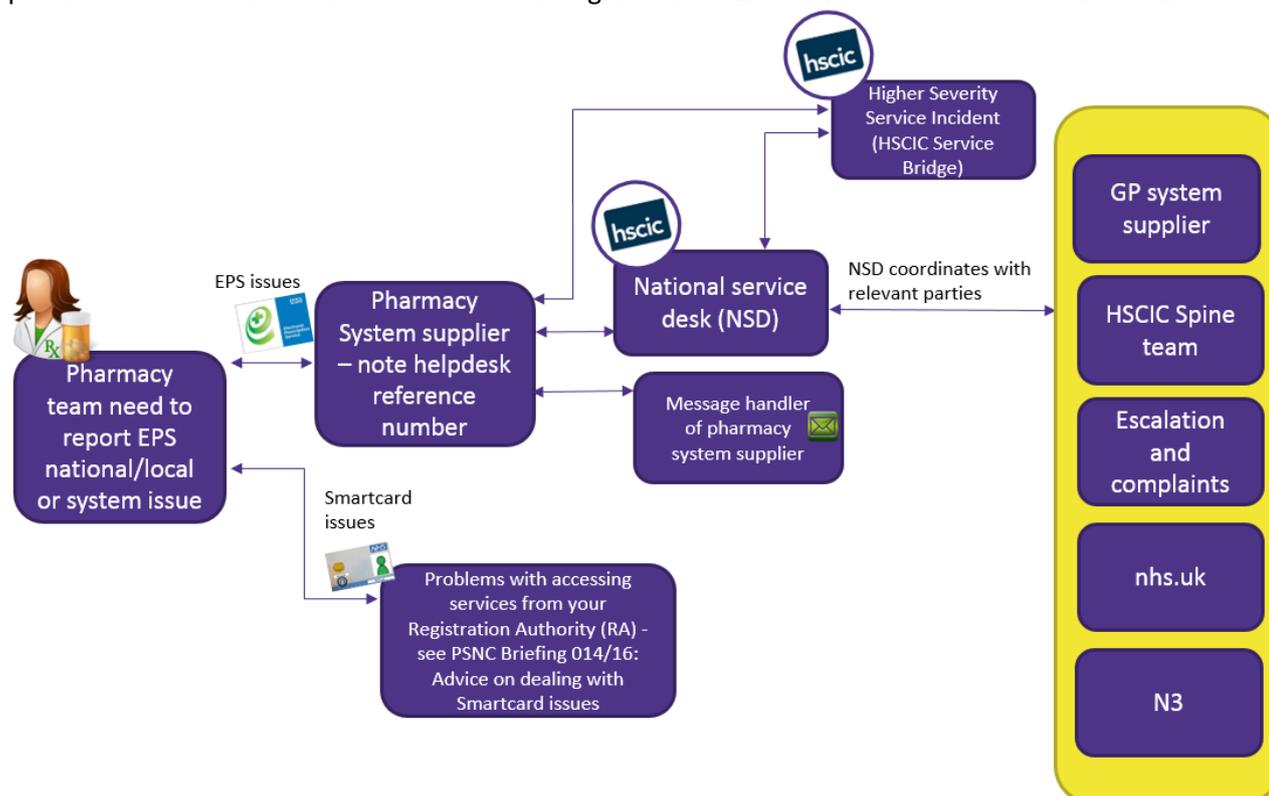
Reporting EPS issues

It is essential that all EPS system issues, however minor, are reported to pharmacy system suppliers. In some cases, the problem may be resolved over the phone, for example if it is a training or local IT system configuration problem. In other cases, the supplier may need to add it on to their work-plan as a future development.

Where the supplier can't resolve a problem due to it being outside of their control, for example, if it is an issue with the GP system or with national IT infrastructure, the pharmacy supplier should:

- (a) escalate the issue to the HSCIC national service desk (NSD) to co-ordinate resolution; and
- (b) report progress back to you.

Remember to obtain a helpdesk reference number whenever you report an EPS issue to your system supplier. If the supplier does not resolve the problem in a satisfactory way, having the reference number is essential so that the problem can be escalated via other routes. A diagram of the EPS service model can be seen below:



Identifying issues with the national EPS systems

PSNC recommends pharmacy staff use the following three EPS tools:



Alerts: Staff can register to receive text or email alerts in the event that the national HSCIC systems that support EPS are experiencing issues at tinyurl.com/Spinealerts.



Checker: Visit the HSCIC service status checker webpage which provides information about the status of the national systems at tinyurl.com/EPSChecker.



Tracker: The EPS Prescription Tracker webpage provides information on the status of individual prescriptions at tinyurl.com/EPStracker.

The EPS Service Review

PSNC has received reports from pharmacy teams that issues raised with pharmacy system suppliers are not always dealt with as effectively as pharmacy teams might hope. HSCIC conducted a comprehensive review of the service model after receiving feedback from PSNC, pharmacy contractors and other stakeholders. The review, conducted in 2015, produced the following key recommendations:

1) HSCIC to monitor all EPS local systems

The real-time monitoring of all system issues (e.g. slow running of particular pharmacy systems) will help support resolution.

2) Visibility of system status

The status of all EPS systems to be made available as a clear dashboard to all end-users via the service status checker webpage (see above).

3) Pharmacy system suppliers' platform/process to be reviewed

These reviews will look at:

- areas of risk for resilience and will result in the development of an improvement plan to resolve vulnerabilities; and
- suppliers' processes in relation to recognised best practices for managing IT services.

4) System functionality to be reviewed

A review of changes requested to national systems. Agreed changes will be built into a work-off plan.

5) Pharmacy system supplier agreements to be established between system suppliers and the Secretary of State for Health

The Service Level Agreements would include:

- fix and response times for pharmacies that raise issues;
- availability targets; and
- systems to be managed in accordance with recognised quality standards (ITIL/ISO).

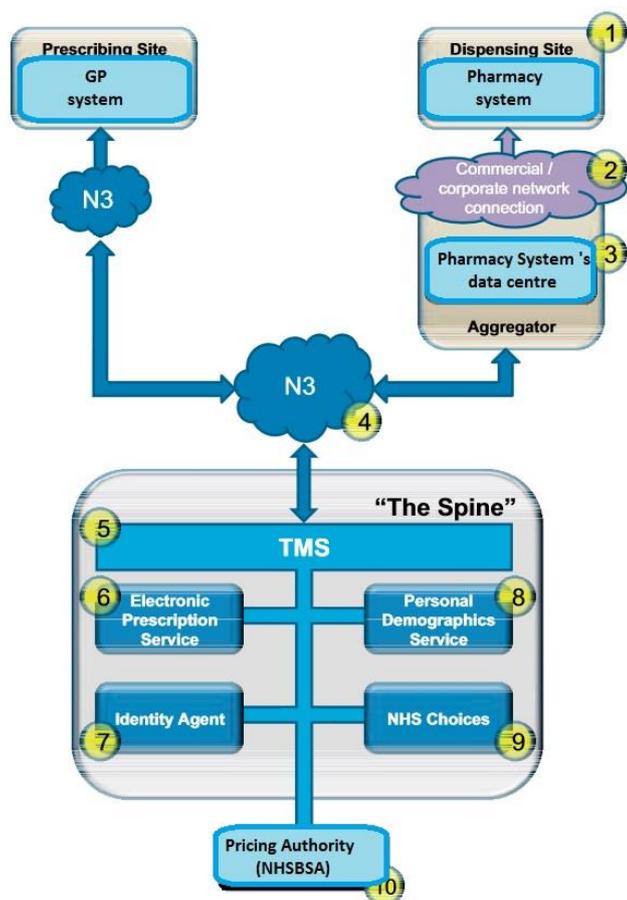
6) HSCIC to co-ordinate resolution of high severity service incidents

Following the agreements mentioned above in point 5, HSCIC's 'Service Bridge' (the co-ordination facility for national service incidents) should act as command and control during high severity service incidents, e.g. EPS local system non-availability or inadequate performance. During a high severity incident HSCIC should issue clear, consistent and timely communication to all stakeholders and adhere to agreed escalation paths.

Implementation of the service review recommendations is one of the dependencies that need to be implemented before the move to the next phase of EPS (psnc.org.uk/fulleps).

EPS components

The EPS is made of several key components and when issues are experienced it's useful to understand which component may be affected.



1. The pharmacy system is the component that resides within the pharmacy and is used on a daily basis to aid in the dispensing process (i.e. the PMR, printer, scanner and smartcard reader).

2. The network connection connects your pharmacy to the internet, and 'aggregators' connect pharmacies to the N3 (NHS) network. Most system suppliers will arrange connectivity for their community pharmacy clients.

3. Message handlers: Most system suppliers use a central 'message handler' to send or receive prescription messages to/from the Spine. Each system supplier is responsible for their message handling method.

4. The N3 network is the NHS's internal network and allows organisations such as community pharmacies to connect to the Spine (psnc.org.uk/n3).

5. TMS (Transactional Messaging Service) is the Spine's equivalent of a postman and is responsible for delivering messages to and from the individual Spine components and the prescribing and pharmacy systems.

6. The Electronic Prescription Service deals with incoming and outgoing electronic prescription messages.

7. The Identity Agent checks the user has relevant authority to connect to the Spine and informs the prescribing or dispensing system of the activities the user has been sponsored (is allowed) to carry out. The prescribing or dispensing system then uses this information to allow the user to carry out those tasks

8. Personal Demographics Service (PDS) is the electronic equivalent of the phone book. It contains the NHS number, name, address and associated demographics (including any nominations) of each patient in England registered with an NHS number.

9. NHS Choices hold the details of which pharmacies are EPS Release 2 enabled. It is essential that the information held on NHS Choices, including the pharmacy's current trading name and postcode is up-to-date (psnc.org.uk/nhschoices).

10. Pricing Authority - When an electronic prescription claim notification is submitted to the Spine, the message is forwarded to the Pricing Authority so that the information can be used for reimbursement.

Find out more about EPS at psnc.org.uk/eps. If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact [Daniel Ah-Thion, EPS Lead](mailto:Daniel Ah-Thion).