

Support for NHS community pharmacy contractors in Surrey and Sussex

Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex
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In light of recent developments and fast-moving news about the Coronavirus outbreak, we wanted to let you know about some of the ways Surrey and Sussex LPCs are supporting members during these challenging times.

We would also like to remind everyone that our role to support and represent contracts continues at pace. Whilst PSNC are coordinating a national response by coordinating the COVID-19 Forum and continue to input to national guidance, we are closely monitoring local situations, for example guidance issued from all local CCGs to primary care and giving clarity on the impact on community pharmacy, if needed.

In the meantime, we would urge contractors in Surrey and Sussex to remain vigilant to our fast-paced environment and keep checking NHS mail regularly for updates from NHS England and PSNC.

Please get in touch if you have concerns about locally implemented guidance and policies and/or changes to accepted local prescribing practices. We'll deal with your query as efficiently and quickly as possible.

However, our telephone lines are VERY busy, so emailing us will help ensure that everyone can get through to us. Send questions, queries and comments to lpc@communitypharmacyss.co.uk, and someone from the team will get back to you as soon as we can.

Here is advice based on current enquiries to our office.

Access to information advice and support

- Our [business continuity advice](#) for pharmacies will help community pharmacists prepare for the unexpected. Email lpc@communitypharmacyss.co.uk to get specific one-to-one advice to support you and your team stop and/or reduce certain tasks, including substance misuse, medicines compliance aids and nursing/care homes
- We have recently issued local briefings on [Medicines deliveries](#) and our joint briefing with LMC on [MDS/ Dossette boxes](#) is to be signed-off for distribution to all GPs and Community Pharmacies very soon. ([Here it is as a working document](#) for your information).
- We are actively managing our [A-Z list of advice, hints, tips and links to help you manage your NHS contract](#). Contractors must continue to tell us what they need in this resource; recent additions are [P](#) (paracetamol), to reflect the current supply issue and [T](#) (Temporary Safeguarding Payments - Drug Tariff Part XIVC)

Supporting you as primary care changes moves to total triage ways of working

1. **General practice is not 'closed'. It is open, just working differently.**

We support local GPs and their leaders for making changes to the way they operate to safeguard their staff, patients and visitors including:

- Introducing a total triage policy, asking patients who do not have an appointment to phone their practice in the first instance, and not walk-in.
- Continuing to see people face-to-face, where appropriate
- Maintaining communication with you, such as by telephone or NHS mail.

2. Pharmacy colleagues from across Surrey and Sussex have told us their concerns about the impact of this new way of working including the associated rise in pharmacy workload.

- We know that you can't respond in the same way, however we urge you to use it as an opportunity to think about practical steps you can take to protect yourself and your team and reduce your non-essential workload. [Here is some helpful advice from the RPS](#), and **we recommend that you all take all the necessary steps immediately. Our interpretation is this will not affect your compliance with the contract / terms of service**
- Your practice manager should be able to tell you if your surgery has a dedicated prescription/medication email address, and about arrangements for checking it as not all are monitored all day. Please remember that fax is no longer acceptable as a way of communicating between organisations and should not be used.
- Practices should not be directing patients to pharmacies for re-ordering repeat prescriptions

Email us on lpc@communitypharmacys.co.uk for advice if you need to.

Supporting you with prescriptions

1. Thank you for telling us about the huge volumes of prescription requests as a result of patients not being able to walk into their GP surgery. Our current advice is to:

- Email us on lpc@communitypharmacys.co.uk for advice if your Practice continues to direct patients to pharmacies for re-ordering repeat prescriptions, despite you asking them not to. We will escalate on your behalf.
- Please try to encourage those patients and carers who are able to register for patient facing online ordering by downloading and using [Patient Access](#) and/or the **NHS App** from the [App Store \(iPhones and iPads\)](#) or [Google Play \(Smartphone or Tablet\)](#)

2. We have spoken with pharmacy leaders in primary care in both Surrey and Sussex about the duration of repeat prescriptions, sharing (and reminding) of [guidance to general practices issued by NHS England & Improvement and DHSC](#). which states:

"Practices should not change their repeat prescription durations or support patients trying to stockpile: these actions may put a strain on the supply chain and exacerbate any potential shortages. Practices should consider putting all suitable patients on electronic repeat dispensing as soon as possible. The whole repeatable prescription can be valid for a year, but each repeat should be for no longer than the patient has now. For example, if the patient has prescriptions for a month's supply now then the repeat dispensing should be set up as 13 x 28 days' supply"

- If this advice is not followed by your local Practices please, in the first instance, make them aware of the NHS guidance. If this remains unresolved contact us urgently by email on lpc@communitypharmacys.co.uk so that we can escalate it.

3. Prescribers who systematically increase prescription duration on all or a significant percentage of their prescription items, could lead to you facing increased supplier bills in certain months (as more medicines are dispensed per prescription than usual) and then decreased prescription item volume in subsequent months.

- If your dispensing business is affected in this way, you may be entitled to make one or both of claims under temporary safeguarding arrangements. [Read more](#) and, if you need support to claim contact us by email at lpc@communitypharmacys.co.uk

Our priority as LPCs at this time is the wellbeing of NHS community pharmacy contractors in Surrey and Sussex, and your staff. Here we have outlined the highlights of our work to support pharmacists across the three counties.

We will update you regularly as the situation develops, especially about any impacts of the schools closing and about your workers that are at risk for severe

outcomes from the COVID-19 outbreak because they have conditions that elevate risk for severe infection.

Stay safe and well and do keep checking official sources of information (NHS, GOV.UK, PSNC and your professional institutions) for professional updates. We will focus our efforts and communications on how national guidance translates and impacts on us locally, whilst also cascading your concerns up to NHS England and/or PSNC

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