**Key News and Guidance for LPCs: COVID-19**

 *Week ending 19th April*

**COVID-19 general updates**

**COVID-19 testing for pharmacy staff**

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced that an online portal developed by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will be used to allow health and care staff, including community pharmacy staff, to book a test at one of the national test centres. Pharmacy contractors have been sent details on how their staff can access testing, in an email sent by the NHS Business Services Authority to the NHSmail shared mailbox of each community pharmacy in England. Read more here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/covid-19-update-testing-for-pharmacy-staff/>

**Claim Easter Bank Holiday opening payment on MYS portal**

Community pharmacy contractors have until 5th May 2020 to claim payment via the Manage Your Service (MYS) portal for being required by NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) to open between 2pm to 5pm on both Good Friday (10th April 2020) and Easter Monday (13th April 2020). Read more here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/claim-easter-bank-holiday-opening-payment-on-mys-portal/>

**COVID-19 Update: Flu Vaccination Service training**

The latest COVID-19 preparedness letter for community pharmacy from NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) provides further guidance and information on support for pharmacy teams. The letter brings together a number of recent developments. Access the letter and more information here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/covid-19-update-flu-vaccination-service-training/>

**COVID-19: Updated PHE posters**

Public Health England (PHE) updated the set of posters for use in pharmacies. These include an updated poster that should be displayed so it is visible to people seeking to enter the premises, a poster to advise on maintaining a 2m distance from others and a poster pharmacies can use if they are working behind closed doors for part of the day. Read more and access PHE’s posters here:<https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/covid-19-updated-phe-posters/>

**Contractor COVID-19 webinar now on-demand**

PSNC’s recent COVID-19 webinar for community pharmacy contractors is now available to watch on-demand. During the webinar PSNC Chief Executive Simon Dukes outlined how PSNC has been arguing for additional funding and PPE provision as well as pushing to reduce the burden of many contractual and regulatory requirements for contractors. Access the webinar here: [https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/contractor-covid-19-webinar-now-on-demand/](https://ps)

**Operational updates**

**Emergency regs on flexible provision of services by pharmacies and dispensing doctors**

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has recently confirmed that contractors may use relevant provisions in the terms of service on temporary opening hours and closures during an emergency requiring flexible opening hours (NHS Regulations). Read more here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/emergency-regulations-on-the-flexible-provision-of-pharmaceutical-services-by-community-pharmacies-and-dispensing-doctors/>

**Flexible opening hours during the COVID-19 outbreak**

The workload and other pressures on community pharmacy have increased during the outbreak, and for remaining pharmacy staff to stay well and not be fatigued, contractors may need to consider steps to temporarily shorten the working day or have periods of time for staff to recover and catch up with any backlog of work. Read more here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/keeping-your-pharmacy-or-pharmacies-open/>

**Temporary closures during the COVID-19**

During the COVID-19 outbreak, contractors may, with good reason, temporarily close a pharmacy. Options for temporary closure are now available under emergency provisions in the NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013. Read more here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/temporary-closures-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

**Maintaining pharmacy services during the outbreak**

During the outbreak, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has permitted the use of emergency regulations that allow contractors temporary flexible opening hours and temporary closures of pharmacies. Contractors will need to consider how these changes may affect the continuation of pharmacy services in an area, and further information is available here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/maintaining-pharmacy-services-during-the-outbreak/>

**NHS IT**

**COVID-19 Update: Shielded Patient Flag expanded to SCR 1-click**

NHS Digital have added a ‘Shielded Patient Flag’ (previously also known as a Vulnerability flag) to the NHS Summary Care Record (SCR) of patients who are on the shielded patient list. The alert has been visible via NHS Digital’s SCRa web portal. Read more here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/covid-19-update-shielded-patient-flag-expanded-to-scr-1-click/>

**Medicine supply**

**COVID-19 Update: CHM advice on ibuprofen and coronavirus**

The Commission of Human Medicines (CHM) Expert Working Group on COVID-19 has concluded that there is currently insufficient evidence to establish a link between use of ibuprofen, or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and susceptibility to contracting COVID-19 or the worsening of its symptoms. Link to news story: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/covid-19-update-chm-advice-on-ibuprofen-and-coronavirus/>

**FP10 Update: Changes to NHS prescription forms and Tokens**

Changes have been made to the reverse of the new versions (1219) of all FP10 prescription types (FP10SS, FP10D, FP10PN, etc.), and Tokens (FP10DT), to make it easier for patients and pharmacy teams to determine whether the patient is eligible for exemption from the prescription charge, thereby avoiding the possibility of incurring a penalty charge. Read more here: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/fp10-update-changes-to-nhs-prescription-forms-and-tokens/>

**Class 4 MHRA drug alert – Levofloxacin 500mg tablets (Teva UK Limited)**

The Medicines and Health products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a class 4 pharmacy level caution in use for:

Levofloxacin 500mg tablets (Teva UK Limited). Read more: <https://psnc.org.uk/our-news/class-4-mhra-drug-alert-levofloxacin-500mg-tablets-teva-uk-limited/>

**Pharmacy news in the national media**

[BBC News](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52304690) reports that local pharmacies facing a cash crisis. The article features some of the pressures experienced in pharmacies at the moment.

Jackie Doyle-Price, Conservative MP for Thurrock and ex-junior health minister, has a piece in [The Telegraph](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/04/12/nations-health-fighting-covid-19/) praising the role of pharmacists amid the COVID-19 outbreak, in which she highlights increased demand and a lack of PPE. She also calls for greater financial support for the sector in the long term, in the form of a payment to cover the costs incurred in the fight against COVID-19.

[The Times](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pharmacies-call-for-emergency-cash-to-stay-afloat-7zmkl83r2) reports that pharmacies have called for emergency government funding to stay afloat. PSNC is quoted.

**Appendix**

**Remember: Key actions to take during the pandemic**

Contractors and pharmacy teams can take the following actions to ensure they are well prepared:

1. Read the [**NHSE&I guidance**](https://psnc.org.uk/the-healthcare-landscape/covid19/contractor-guidance-and-support/) **and implement its recommended actions;**
2. Clearly display the [**COVID-19 poster**](https://psnc.org.uk/the-healthcare-landscape/covid19/information-for-the-public/) **at points of entry to your pharmacy;**
3. Read your [**business continuity plan**](https://psnc.org.uk/contract-it/essential-service-clinical-governance/emergency-planning/) **and consider whether it needs to be updated to reflect the current and emerging situation;**
4. Keep up to date with developments by regularly checking the information on [**COVID-19 on GOV.UK**](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus)**, the** [**NHSE&I Coronavirus Primary Care webpage**](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/) **and checking your NHSmail shared mailbox on a regular basis for updates from NHSE&I; and**
5. Where possible, display the [**public health advice posters**](https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101/resources/5016) **on hand washing etc.**

#### **Guidance for healthcare professionals**

The key guidance for health professionals is available on the Public Health England (PHE) section of the GOV.UK website:

[**COVID-19: guidance for health professionals (GOV.UK)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus)

NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) published guidance for primary care teams on 27th February 2020. This includes a specific document for community pharmacy teams, which takes the guidance already available on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus), but contextualises it for the community pharmacy environment:

[**NHSE&I Coronavirus Primary Care webpage**](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/)

The guidance explains how to deal with patients presenting in the pharmacy with suspected COVID-19 infection and preparations pharmacy contractors can take to deal with such a scenario. All pharmacy contractors should read the guidance and then undertake appropriate preparations for dealing with potentially infected patients.