



8th April 2020

Temporary Closures due to Illness or other Reasonable Cause

Introduction

1. On 22 March 2020, NHSE&I reminded contractors that for temporary closures, NHSE&I must:
 - be informed of the temporary closure (and any arrangements for continuity of service with other contractors/pharmacies)
 - the pharmacy NHS 111 Directory of Services (DoS) profile must be updated (this is important to ensure that NHS 111 does not send patients to a closed pharmacy, for example, as part of the Community Pharmacy Consultation Service (CPCS))
 - the NHS Website must be updated
2. NHSE&I is encouraging cooperation between community pharmacies and GP practices in primary care networks, to deliver the best care, and protect and maximise the capabilities of staff across practices and pharmacies. NHSE&I is also encouraging local pharmacies to work to maintain continuity of services in the event of temporary closures through 'buddy' arrangements, stating:

Particular thought should be given to patients receiving services such as supervised consumption or monitored dosage systems. Consideration can be given to providing daily doses rather than supervised consumption on an individual patient risk assessed basis.
3. The new guidance from NHSE&I is included in the community pharmacy SOP. [Read the SOP](#)
4. If contractors close, they should consider using the [community pharmacy emergency closure checklist](#), which has been prepared with NHSE&I.

Temporary closures – terms of service

5. The NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical) Regulations 2013 (NHS Regulations) provide that where a community pharmacy contractor is prevented by *illness or other reasonable cause/a reason beyond their control* from opening the pharmacy, if the contractor...
 - *makes arrangements with one or more NHS community pharmacies ... situated in the same area for the continued provision of pharmacy services and medicine supplies, if this is practicable;*
 - *notifies NHSE&I of the suspension as soon as practical; and,*

- *uses all reasonable endeavours* to re-open the pharmacy;

... the contractor will not be in breach of the terms of service under the NHS Regulations. (Paragraph 23 of schedule 4 of the NHS Regulations.) Considering each relevant aspect:

illness or other reasonable cause/a reason beyond their control.

6. Staff illness with COVID-19, or suspected staff illness, self-isolating for public protection; or other reasonable cause associated with the coronavirus pandemic, for example, closure of the pharmacy for a deep clean, are clearly circumstances beyond the control of the contractor that may result in closure of the pharmacy for a shorter or longer period of time.

makes arrangements with one or more NHS community pharmacies ... situated in the same area

7. Community pharmacy is committed to providing pharmacy services and the provision of medicines to patients and the public, particularly during this crucial time. If it is necessary for a pharmacy to close, the continued provision of services in the area is expected, so far as this is practicable. Therefore, pharmacy contractors are encouraged to have 'buddy arrangements' with one or more other NHS pharmacies in the same area, so that when they are closed temporarily, members of the public can obtain medicines from one or more other nearby pharmacies. Such arrangements may already be part of a contractor's business continuity arrangements.
8. The longer a pharmacy is closed, the more likely it will be practicable for a pharmacy contractor to make such arrangements with other pharmacies in the area. Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs) are willing to advise contractors, as appropriate.

notifies NHSE&I of the suspension as soon as practical

9. NHSE&I should be informed of the temporary closure as soon as practicable using the relevant form (annex 14 – unplanned temporary suspension of services), which is available on the NHSE&I website; or by using another suitable form.
10. NHSE&I should also be informed of the arrangements made with one or more NHS community pharmacies for the period or temporary closure - the 'buddy arrangements'.
11. Pinnacle Health Partnership is providing a PharmOutcomes module to all community pharmacies in England free of charge during the outbreak, which can be used to notify your LPC of your current business stress level and can also generate a notification form, for you to print and send to NHSE&I as formal notification of any temporary closure.

uses all reasonable endeavours to re-open the pharmacy

12. Pharmacy contractors are expected to use all reasonable efforts to re-open for the contracted core and supplementary hours, subject to ongoing pressures associated with the outbreak.

13. This approach and procedure for notification has been agreed between PSNC and NHSE&I.

Community pharmacies situated in other premises

14. Community pharmacies situated in other premises, for example, GP practices, supermarkets and shopping arcades may have other reasonable cause to close, due to circumstances beyond their control: for example, the other premises in which they are situated may close, which may mean the pharmacy must close. In discussion with NHSE&I there may be a decision to relocate staff to another pharmacy for a period of time, to relieve work pressures in the contractor's other community pharmacies or elsewhere in the community pharmacy network. PSNC is still in discussion with NHSE&I on funding for pharmacies that have to close during the outbreak (and how any displaced pharmacy staff may be able to support the network as a whole), but:

the NHS has committed to make payments where required to contractors who are required to close due to COVID-19

See: [NHSE&I Letter: Next steps on NHS response to COVID-19](#)

100-hour pharmacies Notification

15. 100-hour pharmacies and 40-hour pharmacies are subject to the same considerations, as set out above, and for example, must *makes arrangements with one or more NHS community pharmacies ... situated in the same area* if they close temporarily. However, there may be fewer pharmacies available for 'buddy arrangements' to cover extended opening hours, beyond normal working hours. If this is the case, it may be a priority for 100-hour pharmacies to maintain their extended opening hours.