[Date]

Dear [PCN Clinical Director]

I am writing to let you know that over the coming weeks, community pharmacies across your PCN will be coming together to discuss how they can support key NHS priorities, focusing specifically on two topics that form part of priority patient services and local system resilience. These discussions have been prompted by [**NHS England and NHS Improvement’s new Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS)**](https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/pharmacy-quality-scheme-guidance-2020-21/), which commenced on 1st October 2020.

Within the scheme, there are two domains that require community pharmacy contractors to collaborate within PCN geographies and to work with the PCN. The first of these is to support the provision of NHS flu vaccinations for patients aged 65 years and over. You will be aware that both community pharmacy and general practice are being incentivised through the PQS and the [**Impact and Investment Fund**](https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/investment-and-impact-fund-2020-21/) respectively, to work collaboratively to increase the number of eligible patients vaccinated.  As part of this, community pharmacies in the PCN geography will be sharing a draft community pharmacy flu vaccination plan with you via the PCN Pharmacy Lead.

The second of the two PCN domains requires community pharmacies to share their high-level business continuity plans and together, work out how best to provide support to patients and fellow professionals, should a pharmacy or a general practice have to close in an emergency, e.g. due to staff having to self-isolate because of COVID-19.

To support both pieces of work, the PCN Community Pharmacy Lead [LPCs can add Leads name if the wish to personalise] will be in touch with you and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss and understand both the PCN’s flu vaccination plans and practice and PCN level business continuity plans in the event of a practice closure. This will better enable the pharmacies to also consider these plans as part of their collaborative working.

I have attached a short briefing to provide you with some further background information and a short summary of the requirements of the PQS.

Please feel free to contact me directly should any further information or assistance be needed.

Yours sincerely

[Chief Officer’s details]

**Briefing for Primary Care Network Clinical Directors - Pharmacy PCN Leads and the Pharmacy Quality Scheme Autumn 2020**

**Background**

As part of the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF), community pharmacies are being encouraged, via the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS), to come together within their Primary Care Network (PCN) footprints to work more collaboratively both between themselves and with their PCNs on the provision of priority patient services and local system resilience.

Under the previous PQS initiative in late 2019, pharmacies came together to identify a single Community Pharmacy Lead for each PCN and the Lead then made an initial contact with their PCN Clinical Director.

The new PQS seeks to progress collaborative working with the PCN by:

* focusing on increasing the number of patients aged 65 years and over who receive a flu vaccination; and
* improving local system resilience through pharmacies working together to consider their business continuity planning and sharing aspects of these plans with their PCN. Similarly, the PCN or practices are encouraged to share aspects of their business continuity plans related to the unforeseen closure of a practice, so that pharmacies can ensure they will be able to maximise the support they provide to patients and the practice in such a scenario.

This collaborative work will be facilitated by our identified Pharmacy PCN Lead; the LPC will be able to provide the contact details of the lead for your PCN if you do not already have them.

The CPCF funding for this role remains limited, so while it is hoped that the lead’s interactions with the PCN will foster greater ongoing mutual understanding, dialogue and integration on a range of matters, initially they will understandably need to have a clear focus on the requirements of the PQS.

**PQS requirements for 2020/21**

**Flu vaccination for the 65 years and over group**

The first of the two PCN domains require that the Pharmacy PCN Lead has engaged with the PCN Clinical Director to agree how community pharmacies in the PCN will collaborate with general practice to increase the overall vaccination uptake in the over 65s. The aim of this domain is to reduce the risk of harm from the influenza virus for all patients aged 65 and over and to reduce pressure on the NHS during winter.

[Insert your LPC name] will be working with all partners to facilitate these interactions, and to perhaps propose what such collaboration may involve. It may be that sharing and discussing some basic information on how pharmacies and practices are planning to overcome the challenges faced in service delivery this year for this cohort would be a sensible approach, so that the overall “offer” to patients is better understood by all.

For more information on this PQS requirement please see:

[**psnc.org.uk/ pqs-part2**](https://psnc.org.uk/pqspart) (Domain 4).

**Business Continuity Discussions**

The second of the two PCN domains requires the Pharmacy PCN Lead to:

* **Facilitate discussions between pharmacy contractors** with the aim of ensuring all participating pharmacy contractors understand the high-level business continuity plans each pharmacy has in place should they need to temporarily close the pharmacy and can adopt a collaborative approach to support those plans, where appropriate and necessary.

The discussion must similarly include, where available, the sharing of information on the plans of general practices within the PCN, should they need to temporarily close. This should facilitate improved understanding of all participating contractors regarding local business continuity planning, and support the smooth enactment of individual business continuity plans across the PCN, should the need arise;

* **Liaise with the PCN Clinical Director (or their appointed lead)** and other relevant individuals, to gain an understanding of the business continuity plans for the general practices within the PCN, should one or more have to close or be severely compromised in the services it can provide. To support this, it is requested that appropriate details of the high-level business continuity plans for the general practices are shared with the pharmacies in the PCN (via the Pharmacy PCN Lead), so that in the event that a general practice needs to temporarily close, pharmacy contractors can adopt a collaborative approach to support the plans of the general practice, where appropriate and necessary; and
* **Collate information from each participating pharmacy and share this with all the pharmacy contractors within the PCN, the PCN Clinical Director, the Local Pharmaceutical Committee and the NHS England and NHS Improvement regional team**.This information includes: contractor contact details for use in an emergency, the names of the pharmacies and general practices that are most likely to be significantly impacted by a temporary closure of each pharmacy (as a result of patient flows) and the high-level details of any arrangements that have been put in place with them which will be activated in the case of the contractor needing to temporarily close their pharmacy.

For more information please see:

[**psnc.org.uk/pqspart2**](https://psnc.org.uk/pqspart) (Domain 5).

NHS England and NHS Improvement’s inclusion of these requirements within the PQS is seeking to support the integration of the community pharmacy network within PCNs. We hope that PCN Clinical Directors will feel able to support this aim.