

Re – Community Pharmacy & the Emerging COVID-19 Situation

You will no doubt be aware of the essential role community pharmacy is playing role in supporting the NHS in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In these highly challenging circumstances, professionals may need to depart from established procedures in order to care for patients and their families. The GPhC regulatory standards for pharmacy are designed to be flexible and to provide a framework for decision-making in a wide range of situations. **Supply of medicines for all the community remains the first priority for community pharmacy.**

We wanted to email you, as the commissioner of the xxx service in XXXXX, to provide an update and advise that it is highly likely that pharmacies may either need to pause providing this service and/or not be proactive in promoting it.

Each pharmacy will make its own decision regarding if, and when, additional services are safe and appropriate to provide. As we move through the phases of COVID-19 we will see different responses as each pharmacy makes decisions based on their individual pharmacy circumstances, taking into consideration current demand, staffing levels, patient safety and the wellbeing of their teams. Pressures on pharmacy teams will vary and change on a daily basis- and therefore their decisions to provide a service, or not, are also likely to vary on a frequent basis.

We are starting to see community pharmacies operating behind closed doors for a few of their opening hours each day. This is being done so that community pharmacy can maintain the continuity of medicines supply, safety and welfare of staff. The overall aim is to provide resilience so that pharmacies can maintain opening on a daily basis for as long as possible, providing face-to-face care to all the community that they serve.

- NHS England and NHS Improvement now permit that a pharmacy under significant pressure may close their doors to the public for up to 2.5 hours a day, including lunch.
- All pharmacies will be expected, on every day they have contracted opening hours, to be open to the public between 10am and 12 noon and 2pm and 4pm as a minimum. 100 hours pharmacies should be open from 10am–12pm and 2pm–6pm as a minimum. This will help give a consistent message to the public about accessing pharmacies.

The [latest guidance](#), also includes:

- Users of the pharmacy should be advised to keep a distance of at least two metres from other people, whether that is pharmacy staff or other users of the pharmacy.
- If the pharmacy becomes busy and staff are concerned that it would not be possible to maintain the two-metre distance; the entrance to the pharmacy can be closed with a member of staff managing entry and exit to the pharmacy.
- It is not recommended that pharmacy staff need to wear facemasks to protect against the virus. These would only be required in high risk situations such as supporting a person showing symptoms of COVID-19 in an emergency.

The Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire Team will now be focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic for at least the next few weeks and will therefore not be promoting/pushing services with our contractors. Service activity will be affected, and targets missed. We thank you for your understanding in this.

If any contracts/SLAs are due for renewal (we are aware some are due 31 March) please can we request that these are rolled over for possibly 6 months to get us through this difficult period.

All parts of the health and social care system are working incredibly hard to support people and their families. During these challenging times we need to understand that professionals will need to depart from usual processes, whilst still following legal requirements. We are all doing our best in difficult circumstances. We trust that we will have your full support during this incredibly difficult period - the NHS can only benefit from us all pulling together.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you wish to discuss anything or have any questions.

Want to know more about the pressure in community pharmacy?

Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6g2kbce58M>
