



COVID-19 Update

Wednesday 22nd April 2020

This new, daily update contains important information for community pharmacy teams about the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In today's update: EPS projects to support the pandemic response; celebrating #pharmacyheroes

NHS Digital's COVID-19 EPS work

NHS Digital's work to support the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic includes work across several EPS-related projects which may be relevant to community pharmacy teams.

Continuation of Phase 4 roll-out

NHS Digital is continuing to support prescribing system suppliers with their roll-out of EPS Phase 4:

- TPP SystemOne GP system – their national roll-out continues with many hundreds of GP practices now live, and many more sites due to go-live in the coming weeks and months.
- EMIS – the pace of the Phase 4 roll-out has been increased across its GP practice users.
- Microtest and Vision are currently piloting Phase 4 with some of their general practice users.

Around a quarter of GP practices have systems which can send Phase 4 prescriptions.

[Refresh your EPS Phase 4 knowledge](#)

EPS in urgent and other care settings

EPS started being used by urgent care prescribers in 2018 and it is available within the following urgent care prescribing systems:

- Advanced AdastrA prescribing system
- IC24
- EMIS Web
- TPP systems

NHS Digital is now working with EMIS and TPP so that EPS is an option for prescribers to use in extended access hubs, community, out of hours and urgent care settings.

Due to the nature of prescriptions issued in urgent care, prescribers have been advised to consider whether it is necessary to contact pharmacies to notify them that they are issuing an EPS prescription which needs to be dispensed promptly. This approach will also help manage any risk where a temporary pharmacy closure has occurred during the pandemic.

Piloting the 'one-off nomination' feature

TPP SystemOne is piloting a one-off EPS nomination feature for some prescribers using their system. This feature has been requested for use in scenarios such as:

- during emergencies where a pharmacy is going through a temporary closure; and
- for those patients who are not ready to commit to a nomination but would like a one-off nomination instead of a Phase 4 prescription.

Other prescribing systems may consider piloting the feature in due course.

Reporting feedback or issues about EPS

If you have a technical EPS issue, you should contact your PMR supplier or IT support. Where necessary, they can escalate those issues/questions which are outside of their control to NHS Digital's National Service Desk so that issues are properly raised, recorded and resolved.

You can also contact PSNC (it@psnc.org.uk) who can support you through the EPS escalation process. Read more in our [Reporting EPS issues factsheet](#).

Celebrating our #pharmacyheroes

In recent weeks there has been increased media interest in pharmacies and the work they are doing to support local communities. The national pharmacy bodies have been working together to create some resources to help contractors and LPCs showcase their own positive stories. This is to help promote the hard work of pharmacy teams, all of whom who are going above and beyond to support patients and the public throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pharmacy bodies are uniting around the brand **#pharmacyheroes** and are encouraging contractors and LPCs to join us in using this hashtag to promote the great work being undertaken by pharmacy teams. Further information on this joint work will be made available shortly.

In the meantime, why not take a look at our newly updated page about [promoting pharmacy's role](#) in the COVID-19 response.

Have you seen our latest FAQs?

PSNC's COVID-19 hub has an [FAQs page](#) with a large number of answers to queries posed by pharmacy contractors, their teams and LPCs; these are being updated on an almost daily basis. Recent additions include:

Q. Local GP practices are overwhelmed, how will patients continue to access the medicines they need?

Where people need urgent access to their usual prescribed medicines and they cannot get a prescription from their general practice in time to meet their needs, the NHS 111 Online service can be used to make a referral to the [Community Pharmacist Consultation Service](#). This service was successfully piloted in the north west of England and plans to roll out the functionality across the whole of England were brought forward in response to the huge surge in demand for NHS 111 services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The service has been live across the whole of England since 24th March 2020.

Q. Is PSNC raising contractors' concerns with HM Government?

PSNC is in daily discussions with NHSE&I and DHSC on a significant number of issues related to the COVID-19 response. Matters being discussed include the provision of PPE for

pharmacies; contingency funding for pharmacies; protection for pharmacies against sudden medicines price rises; and measures to support the ongoing provision of pharmaceutical services in the case of significant numbers of staff absences. Much of this builds on discussions we have had with the NHS previously about pandemic planning. There are many details still to be worked out by HM Government and PSNC will be a part of those discussions, looking at how we can best protect the network of community pharmacies and allow them to continue their crucial work through this crisis.

[Find answers to more of your questions here](#)

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