



COVID-19 Update

Friday 22nd May 2020

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

In today's update: PNA renewal suspension; PSNC presses for new approach to script switching; provisional registration policy for trainees; wellbeing support guide; Bank Holiday social media graphic.

Suspension of Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment renewals

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has today announced that the requirement to publish renewed Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments (PNAs) will be suspended for a year.

PNAs are due to be renewed and published by Local Authority Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs) in April 2021. However, as most resources have been diverted to the COVID-19 pandemic response, PSNC requested an extension of the term of the current PNAs to reduce unnecessary extra pressure on local authorities and LPCs.

DHSC's announcement means that renewed PNAs will not need to be published until April 2022, but HWBs will retain the ability to issue supplementary statements to respond to local changes and pharmaceutical needs during this time.

[Read more here](#)

PSNC presses for new approach to script switching during COVID-19 pandemic

PSNC has raised concerns about the appropriateness of prescription switching during the COVID-19 pandemic with DHSC.

Community pharmacy contractors have started to receive their FP34 Schedule of Payments relating to the dispensing of March 2020 – the month that the COVID-19 outbreak hit the UK – and many have noticed a larger than usual number of switches listed.

During the pandemic, many pharmacy teams have understandably been concerned about infection control. This, coupled with massively increased workloads, has not been a conducive environment for collecting patient exemption declarations.

PSNC is pressing the DHSC and the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) to take a more pragmatic approach and review their processes around the switching of paper prescriptions with incomplete patient declarations. We have requested that such prescriptions are referred back to contractors or refunded. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak PSNC had proposed that all

potential candidates for switching be referred back to the pharmacy for correction, however, this proposal was not accepted at the time.

[Learn more here](#)

Provisional registration policy for pre-registration trainees

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) has announced its intention to add current pre-registration trainees to the pharmacist register on a provisional basis.

Postponements of the registration assessment scheduled for June and September 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the usual influx of new pharmacists would not be available to support the workforce during this exceptionally busy time for pharmacy.

The Council has therefore published a [policy setting out the criteria](#) that this year's pre-registration pharmacist trainees will need to meet to be eligible to join the register. The document also outlines the requirements that employers must put in place to support provisionally-registered pharmacists.

Those trainees who are provisionally registered will be able to work as a Responsible Pharmacist; but they will have various restrictions on their practice, for example, they will not be able to be locums or superintendent pharmacists. Employers must fulfil various requirements, for example, completing a risk assessment before a provisionally registered pharmacist starts work and ensuring those provisionally registered practise under the guidance and direction of a senior pharmacist, and have appropriate support as they prepare for the pre-registration examination. The GPhC will issue standards for employers which will set out the framework in which pharmacists who are registered provisionally must operate.

This policy has been informed by a wide range of representatives from professional and educational bodies, including PSNC.

In light of this news, Professor Wendy Reid, Acting Chief Executive for Health Education England, has sent a [reassuring message to pre-registration trainees](#).

Wellbeing support guide

The NHS Specialist Pharmacy Service with London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust have developed [wellbeing and accessing support during the COVID-19 pandemic – a 'where to start guide' for pharmacy staff](#). It includes resources to encourage all staff to establish good habits with respect to their wellbeing from the outset and provides some immediate 'go-to' strategies and information to support ongoing wellbeing during the pandemic.

For additional resources on wellbeing, please visit our [Staff wellbeing and COVID-19 testing page](#).

Bank Holiday social media graphic

Monday 25th May marks the first bank holiday that there hasn't been a blanket requirement for all community pharmacies to open since the start of the pandemic. NHS England & NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) has therefore created [this useful graphic about pharmacy bank holiday hours](#) to reflect the difference, which LPCs and contractors may like to use online.

For additional resources to promote pharmacy, please visit our [Promoting pharmacy's role page](#).

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. Pharmacists must attend face-to-face training every 3 years in order to provide the flu vaccination service; how will this be possible given the importance of social distancing?

Following PSNC requesting changes to the usual face-to-face training requirements for the service, Public Health England (PHE) has confirmed that anyone who has undertaken the vaccinations training before and is due to undertake face-to-face training this year can delay that training until next year.

For more information see [Flu Vaccination – training requirements and resources](#).

Q. How will the 2020/21 Flu Vaccination Service be delivered safely by pharmacists?

Due to the public health advice on social distancing and shielding, the flu vaccination programme this year may need to be provided in a different way, for example, with pharmacists wearing PPE. It is also likely that increased public awareness of infection control will mean there is an increased demand for vaccination from eligible patients. Public Health England, NHSE&I and DHSC are considering the potential changes that may need to be made when administering flu vaccines this year and further guidance will be issued to contractors in due course.

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

Keep up-to-date with our hub page: psnc.org.uk/coronavirus

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