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| PSNC News Alert |
| Wednesday 15th December 2021 |

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|  | PQS deadline extension and further measures; update on Lateral Flow Test availability for pharmacy teams.**A number of measures to help ease the immediate pressures on community pharmacies have been agreed by PSNC, NHSE&I and DHSC. These are outlined below. This news alert also contains an update regarding the availability of Lateral Flow Tests.** PQS deadline extension and further measuresPSNC has reached agreement with NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on several measures to help ease the immediate pressures on community pharmacies.  Recognising the challenges that pharmacies are currently facing and the contribution of the pharmacy workforce to the COVID-19 vaccination programme, it has been agreed that:  * There will be an extension to the deadline for meeting the requirements of the Pharmacy Quality Scheme (PQS) in line with last years arrangements;
* Contractors will not be required to complete the Community Pharmacy Patient Questionnaire (CPPQ) for 2021/2022;
* The requirement for pharmacy teams to complete a national audit (intended to be on valproate) in 2021/22 will be waived; and
* The requirement for pharmacy teams to complete a contractor-chosen clinical audit in 2021/22 will be waived.

**Pharmacies are still required to make the PQS declaration during the February window,** but as last year, this will be a claim for work to be undertaken and evidenced by 30th June 2022. Further details will be published shortly as a Drug Tariff determination on the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) website with similar wording to last year. PSNC, NHSE&I and DHSC have also agreed to keep the situation under ongoing review.   These measures are not all that PSNC requested from NHSE&I and DHSC, but they are the majority, and we are pleased that NHSE&I and DHSC have committed to keeping the situation under review.  **Holiday Openings: Boxing Day and New Year’s Day** PSNC has also separately been seeking flexibility from NHSE&I about holiday openings this year. However, NHSE&I have been keen to ensure that pharmacies remain open for their contracted hours over the holiday period given the ongoing impact of the COVID booster campaign on primary care, and the need to maintain patient access.  NHSE&I has informed PSNC that in some areas, a number of contractors are seeking to close due to pandemic and workforce pressures on two specific days, Boxing Day (Sunday 26th December 2021) and New Year’s Day (Saturday 1st January 2022). These two days are **not** Bank Holidays this year, but normal contractual days.  NHSE&I have agreed that contractors in an area may agree with NHSE&I a pharmacy opening plan for pharmacies in that area, which ensures adequate patient access to pharmaceutical services; recognising the pressures contractors are under. **This applies to Boxing Day and New Year’s Day only**. Applications for such plans will be considered by NHSE&I regional teams, which will be keen to ensure fairness between contractors. They are intended for specific areas where there are known difficulties finding a pharmacist for the pharmacy, such as certain rural areas, not as a general invitation to all contractors.Lateral Flow Test availability: Update for pharmacy teamsPSNC has been in urgent discussions with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) about the availability of NHS Test and Trace Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) to pharmacies.  The UKHSA have confirmed that there are plenty of stocks available in the country, and that they have now activated contingency measures to support the supply of tests to pharmacies. Unfortunately, they are unable to lift the cap of one carton per pharmacy per day due to logistical limitations in the distribution system for the test kits.UKHSA contingency measures to deliver tests to pharmacies through Parcelforce have now been activated to increase capacity, and the UKHSA team are exploring other ways to help increase the flow of stock to pharmacies. We hope to see the positive impact of these contingency measures very soon, however, we expect demand for tests to remain high for the next few days.Pharmacies should continue to order stock from Alliance Healthcare using the following PIP code: **PIP: 8943995**‘**DHSC ORIENT GENE test kits**’. If a pharmacy is getting an out-of-stock message from Alliance Healthcare, it is best to try again the next morning as systems will be updated as soon as that day’s UKHSA stock arrives.[**Find out more**](https://psnc.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=86d41ab7fa4c7c2c5d7210782&id=48b5aef587&e=d19e9fd41c) |  |
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