



News Alert

Wednesday 27th March 2019

Medicines Supply Contingency Planning: Update for Pharmacy Teams

Community pharmacy teams should be aware of some recent developments in relation to the UK's exit from the European Union.

EU Exit date extended

The Government has agreed an extension to Article 50.

If the Government's Withdrawal Agreement is approved by the House of Commons this week, the UK's exit date from the EU will be confirmed as **22 May 2019**. If the Withdrawal Agreement is not approved by the House of Commons, the legal default in UK and EU law is that the UK will leave the EU on **12 April 2019** without a deal.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is continuing work on its no-deal planning and guidance to community pharmacy teams remains the same:

- Contractors should not stockpile additional medicines beyond business as usual stocks and should continue to report current shortage issues - e.g. to PSNC if a concession price is necessary;
- Contractors should ask staff to reassure patients that the Government has contingency plans for a no-deal exit from the EU and that they should not stockpile additional medicines at home – PSNC has produced a leaflet suitable for patients [here](#); and
- Contractors should reassure members of the pharmacy team from other European countries that they have the same rights (including any current registration with the General Pharmaceutical Council) following the UK's exit from the EU. Contractors should inform staff of the UK's EU Settlement Scheme, which will remain open until 31 December 2020 in a no-deal scenario. Contractors should consider any potential impact on staff retention and recruitment.

Additionally, Professor Keith Willett, NHS England EU Exit Strategic Commander, has recently issued an update following Parliament's vote to extend Article 50:

[Professor Willett's Letter \(20/03/19\)](#)

[Read PSNC's Briefing on key actions for contractors](#)

Serious Shortage Protocol (SSP)

Serious Shortage Protocols are a measure being introduced by the DHSC to help pharmacies to manage any serious shortages of medicines, should they occur. PSNC supports the introduction of SSPs and is working with DHSC on the details of their implementation: we will issue further guidance to contractors once the details have been finalised.

SSPs will help pharmacists to manage any serious shortages of medicines, should they occur, by setting out which alternatives (e.g. a different strength or formulation) could be dispensed. Each SSP will apply to a specific medicine and will clearly set out the alternatives which could be dispensed by a pharmacy, and under what circumstances, including for which patients and during which period.

There has been some confusion about the scope of SSPs which has led to concerns about their introduction among MPs and others. We have published a briefing which explains what SSPs are; how they are likely to work; and the safeguards in place. The briefing should offer some reassurances for contractors and is also suitable for sharing with any external stakeholders such as MPs or patient groups.

[Read PSNC's Briefing on the Serious Shortage Protocol](#)

Steve Brine resignation

Steve Brine, who is MP for Winchester, has stepped down from his role as the Minister with responsibility for pharmacy over Brexit voting. Whilst we await news of Mr Brine's replacement, PSNC will continue to have dialogue with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England, and we will stress the importance and urgency of the upcoming community pharmacy funding negotiations.

[Read PSNC's news story](#)

Visit [PSNC's Brexit page](#) for further updates and additional information.

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee



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