



Community Pharmacy  
South Central

## Community Pharmacy & Medicine Supply Issues

### KEY MESSAGE:

Stock issues continue to cause disruption, to the medicines supply chain, in primary care. Unsustainable price increases and widespread unavailability continue to be the most commonly experienced reasons for the disruption.

**'Out of stock medicines'** are frequently attributed to global influences. This situation is further complicated as different pharmacies use different wholesalers, may have supplies restricted via quota mechanisms and operate different buying policies. Therefore, an item may show as in stock online at a wholesaler, but this does not always mean a pharmacy is able to procure the item.

**'Price increases'** - the NHS pricing system is designed to accommodate some discrepancy however it is widely understood that it no longer adequately accounts for the numbers of drugs affected and the size of the price differences. This continues to cause significant financial concern for pharmacies. Aripiprazole 10mg tablets is an example where a pharmacy could pay approximately £57 for the item (prices change frequently), but the NHS would re-imburse the pharmacy only £1.44 (November Drug tariff- no concession granted).

**The issues are national and complex therefore it is difficult to locally find a "one size fits all" solution to the problem.**

Please continue to communicate and support each other as pro-actively as possible to minimise patient disruption.

*The stepwise guide below sets out the steps for **both** pharmacies and prescribers to consider in the case of stock or significant price issues. Due to the number of variables at play it is not intended as a panacea for all occasions but may be a useful tool to ensure each occurrence is dealt with as appropriately as possible.*

# STEPWISE GUIDE TO ADDRESS MEDICINE SUPPLY ISSUES

**GREEN** – Pharmacies    **BLUE** – Prescribing Practices & Pharmacies

## 1. CHECK

- Check with your wholesalers & directly with suppliers to see if stock is available or there is a due date.
- Check SPS medicines supply tool for shortages & further information <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/>
- Check for any current serious shortage protocols (SSPs) which may allow alternatives without returning to the prescriber.

## 2. REPORT

- Out of stocks AND price issues must be reported to CPE via reporting tool <https://cpe.org.uk/dispensing-and-supply/supply-chain/medicine-shortages/>

## 3. OPTIONS

- Where appropriate (e.g. out of stocks) the patient may be directed to another pharmacy who has stock. Please confirm with the pharmacy that they have stock. Use whatsapp group where available.
- Return the EPS token to spine and provide patient with a token number/ barcode (return paper FP10 to patient). If part dispensing prevents this continue to step 4.
- Consider the alternatives that are in stock - different strengths, formulations, alternative drugs so you can suggest viable options to a prescriber.

## 4. CONTACT PRESCRIBER

- Complete the Out of Stock template <https://cpsc.org.uk/professionals/other-pharmacy-resources/stock-supply-issues>
- Contact the practice (email, phone - agree with the practice preferred route).
- Agree who will advise the patient of any changes. In most cases this will be the pharmacy unless there are clinical reasons to prevent this.

## 5. NEXT STEPS

- Prescriber to issue the alternative prescription. In the case of repeat medication this will usually be as a one off change or until further notice.

## 6. NO ALTERNATIVES?

- In the case of an out of stock this may require a wider patient review or referral back to the practice.

**Further information & support can be found at:**

- CPE Price concession fact sheet <https://cpe.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Price-concession-briefing-August-2022.pdf>
- Price concession webinar <https://cpe.org.uk/our-news/price-concessions-webinar-now-available-on-demand/>
- Patient factsheet – medicine supply <https://cpe.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/PSNC-Medicines-Supply-Information-Leaflet-July-2022.pdf>
- Local Pharmaceutical Committee [deborah.crockford@cpsc.org.uk](mailto:deborah.crockford@cpsc.org.uk)