

Thursday 2nd April 2020

JOINT UPDATE FROM:

Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire – Local Pharmaceutical Committee

YORLMC – Local Medical Committee

NHS Vale of York CCG & NHS North Yorkshire CCG Medicines Management Team (MMT)

Dear Colleague

A weekly phone-call occurs between LPC, LMC and MMT from both CCGs.

Please see below for an update regarding how we are working together regarding issues relating to the supply of medicines for our populations.

Action required: Please see highlighted in red for any actions required.

Urgent Prescriptions

We are aware that Community Pharmacies are currently extremely busy with high demand for repeat prescriptions and queries from the public. At times the pharmacy may close its doors to the public for certain times (see below for more details) and the phone line may be engaged.

There will be prescriptions that need to be dispensed urgently, for example, palliative care/end of life medicines or antibiotics.

To 'jump the queue' we are seeking to ensure that every Community Pharmacy has a dedicated mobile telephone number, only for healthcare professionals/ GP practice staff to use in an urgent situation. There are currently some logistical issues in ensuring every Community Pharmacy has a generic mobile telephone so in the interim, we advise **GP Practices to contact the Community Pharmacy via email regarding urgent matters.**

The CCG MMT will share the Community Pharmacy NHS email addresses with the relevant localities – one email address per Community Pharmacy (not per individual pharmacist).

The Community Pharmacy will check their emails regularly, a minimum of every 2 hours, and will be able to pull out any requests for urgent matters or dispensing.

Please title your email: '**URGENT DISPENSING** required for <insert patient name>

NHS mail is secure for sending patient identifiable data.

We are asking ALL GP Practices to provide a dedicated phone line AND email general GP Practice email address for Community Pharmacies to be able to use for queries, so the pharmacy can by-pass the main switchboard.

Please ensure the number and email address are generic (i.e. do not belong to one named person) and ensure they are available/manned during the GP Practice usual working hours.

Action required:

Please can each GP Practice provide their **preferred telephone number and generic email address** by emailing their respective Medicines Management Team:

NHS VALE OF YORK CCG: VOYCCG.Rxline@nhs.net

NHS North Yorkshire CCG – please use CCG Rx Line email addresses prior to the merger:

NHS HAMBLETON, RICHMONDSHIRE AND WHITBY CCG:
HRWCCG.Rxline@nhs.net

NHS SCARBOROUGH AND RYEDALE CCG: SCRCCG.rxline@nhs.net

NHS HARROGATE AND RURAL DISTRICT CCG: HARDCCG.Rxline@nhs.net

Changes in Pharmacy Opening Hours

Due to current pressure relating to COVID-19, NHS England has approved a [standard operating procedure](#) for Community Pharmacies allowing them to **close their doors to the public** for up to 2.5 hours a day.

Community Pharmacies must be open to the public (on their usual contracted days):

Between 10 am - 12 pm PLUS 2 pm – 4 pm (as a minimum for standard contract pharmacies)

Between 10 am – 12 pm PLUS 2 pm – 6 pm (as a minimum for 100-hour pharmacies).

As detailed above, we will be arranging ways for healthcare professionals to be able to contact the Community Pharmacies when their doors are closed to the general public.

We recognise that similarly Dispensing Doctors may be required to change their usual service hours, we ask that Dispensing Doctors inform their locality and the MMT of any changes to their usual service hours.

Specific Information on Pharmacy Closures/Change in Opening Hours

NHS England local area team produce a daily update report regarding Community Pharmacy opening hours/closures. We would like to share this information with GP Practices so you know what is happening in your localities.

We will share this information daily (Mon-Fri) – a link to the information, held on the respective CCG websites, will be sent to the GP Practice generic email address, as requested above.

Action Required: Someone in the GP Practice will need to receive this information and cascade any relevant changes regarding opening/closures of local Community Pharmacies to the GP Practice team, as appropriate.

We will seek to start to co-ordinate this information on a locality footprint to ensure coverage for the locality.

Easter Opening Hours

We are aware that GP Practices have been asked to remain open for Good Friday/ Easter Bank Holiday Monday and possibly Easter Saturday and Sunday.

As of today, we have not received the same information regarding Community Pharmacies opening on these days. National negotiation is occurring on this matter. As soon as we hear regarding this we will cascade this information.

Medicines Shortages

We would like to take the opportunity to reiterate the message regarding medicines shortages. The current medicines supply chain is very delicate and under extreme pressure due to increasing demand in both repeat and acute medicines. Community Pharmacies/Dispensing Doctors are currently experiencing shortages on many stock lines and this requires further work and input from all parties to resolve.

Stock Shortage Arrangements – Action Required- Community Pharmacies should not ask the patient to return to their GP Practice if an item is out of stock. The Community Pharmacy should work with the General Practice using the dedicated phone line numbers to arrange a suitable alternative to the out of stock medicine.

It may be that another local Community Pharmacy does have the required stock item and arrangements can be made between Pharmacies to supply medicines to patients.

Quantities/Duration - We ask all GP Practices to ensure that they do not increase the duration of repeat prescriptions, the usual duration, preferably 28 days should be issued. **Requests for increased quantities on repeat prescriptions should be declined**, except in truly exceptional circumstances.

Patients should not be allowed to order more than 7 days before their next repeat is due. **Requests made in advance of 7 days should be declined**, except in truly exceptional circumstances.

The patient should be advised by the GP Practice and Community Pharmacy that they should not expect their repeat prescription to be available within the usual (pre-COVID) 48-72 hours and that they should allow longer for their repeat prescription to be issued and dispensed i.e. patients need to allow 7 days between ordering and collecting their medicines.

Electronic Repeat Dispensing (eRD) – **Action Required** - All GP Practices should seek to change appropriate patients onto electronic repeat dispensing and supply 12 X 28 days via batch prescription. The respective medicines management teams (see generic email address detailed above) can provide advice and guidance on electronic repeat dispensing.

For information/resources regarding eRD please click here: [eRD resources](#)

Any changes to usual services/provision

If for any reason a GP Practice or Community Pharmacy need to make ANY changes in their usual services/ways of operating please can we ask that you remain mindful of other partners in the system/locality and ensure that you communicate these changes very clearly to all relevant parties. The LMC/LPC can support with cascading messages to wider stakeholders.

Accepting Paper Repeat Slips

Understandably GP Practices may not wish to accept requests for repeat medication via the paper request slip.

If there is a change to accepting paper repeat slips patients must be advised of the suitable alternatives for ordering their medicines. **Action Required** - Please do not stop accepting paper repeat slips unless patients are advised of the alternatives, for example:

GP Practices can accept repeat prescription requests by:

- Order online via your GP practice website
- [NHS App](#)

GP Practices may also wish to consider allowing prescription requests via a dedicated email address.

Home Delivery Service

We were anticipating national guidance regarding the home delivery service for Community Pharmacies and Dispensing Doctors.. This will be for shielded patients only.

A letter has been sent out regarding [NHS Volunteer responders](#) but this is still in its infancy and not fully mobilised.

Our local guidance for delivery of medicines is:

- a) First port of call should be a friend or family member known to the person who requires a delivery of medicine
- b) Local volunteer agencies – known to be reputable and with the relevant governance checks in place.
- c) Use of NHS Volunteer responders – healthcare professionals can make requests for volunteers and this must be done via the [NHS Volunteer Responders referrers' portal](#)

The CCG Medicines Management team can provide advice and guidance regarding standard operating procedures/basic governance that should be followed when using volunteers to deliver medicines to patients.

Fraudulent Activity

We have been made aware of a patient trying to obtain supplies of a controlled drug from two separate Community Pharmacies, on the same day, via using the NHS 111 route. This is just a reminder to be vigilant to potential abuse of all prescription systems/processes as people seize the opportunity to exploit any weaknesses in times of change.

Palliative Care Medicines

The CCGs, LPC and LMC are all working very closely with the local palliative care consultants to ensure that each locality has provision/supplies of appropriate palliative care drugs, this will include holding stocks in Community Pharmacy and Dispensing Doctors.

We ask that individual GP Practices/Community Pharmacies or localities DO NOT start to order what they think is appropriate. This needs a system-wide approach and we need to ensure we order appropriate quantities, for the appropriate locations. We

appreciate the urgency and the need to move quickly, this is a top priority for the collective work of the CCGs, LMC and LPC.

Support for installation of physical barriers - CPs and DDs

NHS England has agreed to pay all pharmacies (who are not distance-selling pharmacies) and all dispensing doctors a £300 payment to support the installation of physical barriers such as screens and retractable tape barriers or other adjustments to help enforce social distancing.

We understand this will be paid as a one-off payment from NHSBSA in May 2020 to all Community Pharmacies and Dispensing Doctors.

Sharing of Staff/Contingency Plans

Discussions are occurring to ensure that we can share staff across the system to cover Community Pharmacies and Dispensing Doctors as necessary, to maintain key opening hours and service for our patients.

We will seek to provide further updates, as and when appropriate.

Many thanks for your continued support, cooperation and collaboration regarding these matters.

Sally Tyrer - Chair NY Branch of YORLMC and HRWCCG LMC representative

Ian Dean (CEO) and Jack Davies (Chairperson) - CPHY LPC

Laura Angus – Head of Prescribing, NHS Vale of York CCG

Rachel Ainger – Strategic Lead Pharmacist, NHS North Yorkshire CCG