



Community Pharmacy Essex

Christmas 2021

CONTENTS

Community Pharmacist
Consultation Service
Maintaining workforce
Business Continuity Planning
Communications and key
messaging

ATTACHMENTS

Advanced Service
Specification - NHS
Community Pharmacist
Consultation Service &
Troubleshooting guidelines

Office Contacts

Dear All

First of all a heartfelt appreciation of all the additional work you are doing right now to manage the fresh layer of madness that the booster campaign has heaped on you.

For those of you that are Covid-19 vaccination sites we are getting really positive messages from each ICS on the daily meetings, and we will continue to make sure that everyone else on the calls recognises that Community Pharmacy is the one vaccine provider that is also expected to maintain Business as Usual (BAU).

For those who are not vaccination sites you are still playing a critical role at this really challenging time, and this will be increasingly felt as GP practices and their staff focus on vaccinations and far more activity is diverted to pharmacy.

All of you will be seeing, advising and treating more patients who cannot get an appointment, helping patients who cannot get their repeat prescriptions and possibly supporting patients who have been discharged from hospital to free up bed space.

There is some respite in this week's announcements regarding the extension to PQS and the suspension of CPPE and audits, however some of the other asks were not met. The quarterly NMS reports must still be submitted and your NHS website must still be reviewed every 3 months even if nothing has changed.

Rather than our usual Christmas Newsletter this year we are attempting to put together a sort of survival kit for winter- none of the information is new, but we have put together some resources based on the most frequent questions, queries, comments and complaints we get here in the office.

That said, we would like to wish a very Merry Christmas to all those that do, and at least a bit of a welcome and much-deserved break for those that don't.

Here's hoping for a healthy 2022.

Regards
Karen, Angela, Frank and Mo

Community Pharmacist Consultation Service

While GP CPCS remains patchy we anticipate a greater number of 111 referrals in the coming weeks, so please make sure you are prepared for these.

We are including a hard copy of the service specification as we are aware many locums may have limited community pharmacy experience, or may not have been working in the sector when the service was first commissioned.

We are also including two A4 troubleshooting guides highlighting the most common issues with urgent medicine supply and minor illness consultations.

Maintaining workforce

One of the biggest challenges in January 2021 was the number of staff testing positive for Covid-19, or having to self-isolate due to the rules at that time.

Please make sure that all members of the team continue to **follow Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)** measures, including wearing a type IIR face mask covering mouth **AND NOSE**. These are still available free of charge through the NHS portal. This will not only offer some protection to your staff in the workplace, but may also provide mitigation in the event of a positive case in the pharmacy. It is far easier to ask members of the public to comply with face-covering rules if all the staff are correctly masked up, and we have had complaints from members of the public when pharmacy teams have not been seen to follow current IPC guidance.

Community pharmacy staff are currently outside the scope of mandatory vaccination, but as healthcare professionals you will be aware of the importance of vaccination for yourselves and your teams. Resources are available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/vaccination-as-a-condition-of-deployment-for-healthcare-workers-phase-1-planning-and-preparation/> (england.nhs.uk) for discussions about the benefits of vaccination and addressing any vaccine hesitancy.

Also make sure you and your staff are following the latest guidance regarding LFD testing, PCR testing if positive/symptomatic, self-isolation etc (I'm not going to put anything here as it changes so often.) It is probably better to have one member of staff off awaiting a PCR result this week than the whole team off next week.

If you or your staff are struggling there is support available. Community Pharmacy teams can access the NHS wellbeing service at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/> and there is further support available from www.pharmacistsupport.org

Of course if you just feel the need to have a chat or to let off some steam please pick up the phone and call us.

Business Continuity Planning

You should have a business continuity plan, however you may need to refresh this bearing in mind the current levels of Covid-19, the additional demands on pharmacy and the inevitable bad weather in the next few weeks.

You may want to take pressure off the team pro-actively by stopping unfunded, non-commissioned services such as **blister packs** (other than when **you** have assessed this as the best support for a patient) and **free deliveries**. You may want to provide blood pressure monitoring as part of the **hypertension advanced service**, which does include measurements at GP request, but only if you are signed up for the service.

Next you might want to stop providing other **advanced services**, but do think about the impact on patient care. If you are stopping services for the short term you need to change your **Directory of Services (DoS)** entry so that patients are not referred to you.

If you feel that you are struggling to provide essential services safely then you may need to consider a **temporary** closure or **temporary** reduction in opening hours. Before you do this please check with other pharmacies in your immediate area to see if you can “buddy up”, and make sure that you are not all planning temporary closures over the same hours. It is also useful as you are required to display details of the nearest pharmacy that is open, so you do need to check this before you give out wrong information! Remember this isn't about NHSE being difficult, it is about making sure patients can access a pharmacy.

To do this you will need to contact NHSE on england.pharmacyeast@nhs.net and tell them:

- What hours you will be closing,
- What the reason is (not just “covid” or “busy” but something like “one staff member awaiting PCR result, one other off sick” or similar),
- When you expect to return to normal hours.
- Ideally you should give 24 hours notice, but that may not always be possible. You must amend your DoS entry to show that you are closed.

NHSE can refuse this notification, however generally speaking the more information you provide the more likely they are to approve it.

Communications and key messaging

We must confess that there have been about three occasions in the last couple of months when we really wished we still had fax machines !

However- we do need to remind you that you do all have a premises shared NHS mail account, and it is part of the contract **terms of service** that at least two members of the team have a personal NHS mail account attached to this. I would suggest go for more to cover holidays, sickness etc, as the premises shared mailbox is where all NHS communications are now sent.

You should also use NHS mail if you are sending any **patient identifiable information**, whether that is to a GP or if you are asking us to support any complaints or investigations. Our NHS mail is essex.lpc@nhs.net

We have raised concerns with NHSE about the number of irrelevant **gateway** messages that are being sent and will try to rationalise these. Our new **website** is going live on 14th January and we will use this as the place for all key documents to try and avoid email overload.

Office Contact details

Office contact phone number: 01245 460079

General queries can be e-mailed to office@cpesx.org.uk or essex.lpc@nhs.net

Karen Samuel-Smith (Chief Officer)
karen@cpesx.org.uk mobile number 07900 218444

Angela Culleton (Office Manager)
angela@cpesx.org.uk mobile number 07566 798980
(Monday to Thursday 9am to 4pm)

Frank McLaughlan (Field Manager)
frank@cpesx.org.uk mobile number 07566 798979

Mo Raje (GP CPCS Implementation Lead)
mo@cpesx.org.uk mobile number 07566 798976
(Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday)

Lisa Lovell (Stop Smoking consultant)
growinglifestyles@gmail.com



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