

Pharmacy First Service for Winter Conditions

November 2021 – March 2022

Service Specification

October 2021

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Background

Many common winter conditions can potentially be self-managed. These are often self-limiting and require little or no medical intervention. Many people who consult GPs for common conditions could instead be assisted by a community pharmacist. Pharmacists are trained to deal with common conditions; offering advice, recommending over-the-counter (OTC) products or referring patients to other healthcare professionals as appropriate.

A Pharmacy First Service is a service whereby patients are encouraged to consult with a participating community pharmacy first rather than their GP for a defined list of common conditions. The pharmacist will give advice and (if appropriate) supply medication from an agreed formulary or refer the patient to the GP if necessary. Medicines, when deemed necessary, are supplied free of charge.

Symptoms of COVID19 and other winter conditions:

Patients with suspected COVID19 should NOT enter the pharmacy but may wish to access the service remotely (e.g by phone) for advice and/or treatment to alleviate their symptoms.

COVID19 remains a serious threat to public health. Patients with symptoms which suggest they may have COVID19 should be advised to book a PCR test immediately via the NIDIRECT website at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-testing> and self-isolate until the results of the test are known.

The main symptoms most commonly associated with COVID19 remain:

- high temperature
- new continuous cough
- loss or change in sense of smell or taste

However with each new variant of the COVID19 virus symptoms have become more diverse. There is overlap between the symptoms of COVID19 and those of other winter conditions such as; sore throat, headache, myalgia, sneezing, runny nose, cough, cold and other flu-like illness. Patients presenting to the pharmacy first service with any of these symptoms may receive advice and when necessary medicines to alleviate their symptoms.

1. Service Aim and Objectives

The aim of the Pharmacy First Service is to displace activity, including consultations, advice and generating prescriptions for common conditions, from general practice to community pharmacy.

The objectives of the service are to:

- Reduce prescribing for winter conditions and reduce the number of general practice consultations for these conditions.
- Support the cost-effective use of medicines and health service resources in primary care.
- Provide advice to patients with symptoms of winter conditions
- Promote the role of the community pharmacist as the first port of call for the management of these conditions.

2. Service Description

The Pharmacy First Service allows eligible patients to use their community pharmacy as the first port of call for the management of winter conditions. The pharmacist offers advice, treats or refers patients according to their needs.

The Pharmacy First Service is available to any person registered with a GP in Northern Ireland.

Each Pharmacy First consultation must be carried out by an appropriately trained pharmacist.

The consultation may take place by phone, video conference or in person in the pharmacy at the discretion of the pharmacist.

3. Service Outline

3.1 Eligibility for service

The following persons are **eligible** for the service:

- Persons who are registered with a GP in Northern Ireland

The following persons are **not eligible** for the service:

- Patients in Care Homes (Nursing or Residential).

3.2 Pharmacy Eligibility for service

The service can only be provided from community pharmacies where the contractor:

- Holds a contract with the HSCB to deliver the service.
- Ensures staff are trained, competent and available to deliver the service.
- Ensures a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is in place to support delivery of the service in line with the service specification.

3.3 Patient consent

- Before the consultation the pharmacist must give patients sufficient information to inform consent to avail of the service.
- A privacy notice should be used to explain to the patient how their personal data will be used and a copy supplied if requested.
- The pharmacist will seek verbal consent from the patient. In the interest of health and safety and infection control there is no requirement for patients to sign.

3.4 Pharmacy First Consultations

Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic the service specification required patients to present in the pharmacy for a consultation with the pharmacist. The service specification has been updated to include the use of **telephone or video consultations**. This update was introduced to take into account the needs of:

- vulnerable members of the community;
- patients who are continuing to shield;
- patients who are isolating due to symptoms of COVID19, confirmed diagnosis of COVID19, household contact or on advice from NI Test and Trace Service.

All consultations carried out by video call should take place via the Pharmacy's HSC Zoom account as this enables the most appropriate security settings to be applied to all HSC users of Zoom. Details of how to apply for a HSC Zoom account can be found at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3154.htm>

Care provided through the service includes the assessment, advice and treatment of symptoms of winter conditions.

All patients are assessed by a pharmacist who considers the most appropriate course of action. This might involve the provision of advice and reassurance alone, or the provision of advice and reassurance alongside medicines which alleviate symptoms. In some cases the pharmacist may consider that referral to another healthcare professional is indicated. The referral form in appendix 1 may be used to facilitate this.

Occasionally someone will present/call on behalf of someone else, for example a parent or guardian might present/call with a child or a carer might present/call on behalf of someone they care for.

The pharmacist assesses the symptoms in order to determine the cause and severity of the illness. They will advise the individual (or their parent, guardian or carer) on the nature of the illness, the symptoms to expect, the expected duration of the illness, any requirement for follow up and any steps that can be taken to alleviate symptoms. Individuals will also be advised on how they might care for themselves should the condition recur. Relevant patient information leaflet(s) may be provided to the patient.

On occasion a pharmacist will decide that an individual's symptoms are such that a supply of medicine(s) is indicated. Where this is the case the medicine(s) should be selected from the agreed formulary. Where an individual expresses a preference for a product which is not included in the formulary and the pharmacist considers that such a supply is appropriate the pharmacist is able to sell the patient that product and the consultation shall still be considered to be within the terms of service.

Where a medicine is supplied it shall be appropriately labelled and the pharmacist shall counsel the individual regarding its safe and effective use.

Pharmacists must ensure medicines supplied comply with current good practice guidelines e.g. Pharmaceutical Society guidance available at:

<http://www.psn.org.uk/publications/code-of-ethics-and-standards/>
MHRA Drug Safety Advice <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update>
Pack/product updates and individual SPCs available at
<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>

Where supply of medicine and / or written patient information is indicated for a patient following a telephone or video consultation, arrangements for collection of these items should be agreed between the pharmacist and the individual.

Local arrangements should be in place for dealing appropriately with individuals requiring referral. Individuals may be advised to contact their GP where despite treatment their condition does not improve.

3.5 Pharmacy First records

- In a change from last year, the only requirement for recording of service activity is a monthly activity form (appendix 2). An entry should be made for each consultation.
- A copy of the activity forms must be scanned and emailed to local HSCB offices on a monthly basis. These records will be used as part of the service evaluation and will inform commissioning of any future Pharmacy First Service for Winter Conditions.
- All records must be retained in the pharmacy in line with the DOH Good Management, Good Records guidelines¹
- On occasion where a patient **requires referral to their GP or OOH medical centre** details of the consultation should be securely transferred in line with locally agreed arrangements

3.6 Completion of the pharmacy voucher

- When medication is supplied the pharmacist must complete and sign the pharmacy voucher at the time of the consultation.

¹ Department of Health's Good Management, Good Records Section M, outlines the requirements for retention and disposal of community pharmacy held records: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/disposal-schedule-section-m>

- The pharmacy voucher should be accurately coded for any medicine(s) supplied using the usual product codes from the [NI code book](#)
- The pharmacy voucher must also be coded with the Pharmacy First code **97003/1**
- Pharmacy vouchers must be bundled separately from HS21 prescription forms and forwarded to BSO with the second monthly prescription submission.

4. Formulary

The Pharmacy First Formulary includes and is limited to:

Paracetamol 120mg in 5ml sugar-free suspension x 100ml
Paracetamol 250mg in 5ml sugar-free suspension x 200ml
Paracetamol 500mg tablets x 32
Ibuprofen 100mg in 5ml sugar-free suspension x 100ml
Ibuprofen 200 mg tablets x 24
Ibuprofen 400 mg tablets x 24
Pseudoephedrine 30mg/5ml linctus x 100ml
Pseudoephedrine 60mg tablets x 12
Sodium chloride 0.9% nasal drops x 10ml

5. Premises

Pharmacies participating in the Pharmacy First Service must have a consultation area that meets the following requirements:

- The consultation area should be where both the patient and pharmacist can sit down together; where possible social distancing requirements should be maintained.
- The patient and pharmacist should be able to talk at normal speaking volumes without being overheard by another person (including pharmacy staff).
- PPE should be used in line with the most up-to-date government advice available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-protective->

[equipment-ppe-illustrated-guide-for-community-and-social-care-settings](#)

- The consultation area should be clearly designated as an area for confidential consultations, distinct from the general public areas of the pharmacy.

6. Pharmacists

The service may only be provided by registered pharmacists who are competent to deliver the service in line with the service specification.

7. Remuneration and reimbursement

7.1 Remuneration for service provision will be based on a capitation model and any products supplied via PV1 forms will be reimbursed by BSO in the usual manner. Initial funding of £200k per month has been made available to set up and deliver this service from November 2021. Service funding will be allocated to pharmacies, contracted to provide the service, on the following basis:

- One third divided equally amongst contractors
- The remaining two thirds to be allocated on prescribing volume, based on 20/21 dispensing data.

7.2 Service monitoring will comprise of the following two elements:

- PV1 forms submitted to BSO
- Monthly activity forms returned by email to the local HSCB offices.

7.3 Post payment verification

- The pharmacy contractor will be required to submit all records requested by HSCB in relation to the Pharmacy First Service within 14 days of receipt of the request.
- The pharmacy contractor is required to co-operate on a timely basis in respect of any review or investigation being undertaken by HSCB / BSO regarding the Pharmacy First Service.
- In the event where HSCB / BSO cannot assure claims relating to the provision of the Pharmacy First Service recovery of the payment will be sought.

8. Other terms and conditions

- The pharmacy contractor shall not publicise the availability of the service other than using any materials specifically provided by the HSCB without the prior agreement from HSCB or in any way which is inconsistent with the professional nature of the service.
- The pharmacy contractor shall not give, promise or offer to any person any gift or reward as an inducement to or in consideration of his/her registration with the service.
- The pharmacy contractor shall not give, promise or offer to any person engaged or employed by him any gift or reward or set targets, against which that person will be measured, to recruit patients to the service.
- The pharmacy contractor shall ensure that service provision is in accordance with professional standards.

Appendix 1 – Pharmacy First Service: Patient referral form

Patient Name, Address & Postcode		Pharmacy name, Address & Postcode	
H&C No. (if known)		Telephone number	
Date of Birth		Contractor Number	
GP Practice & Address		Pharmacist's name	
		Date of consultation	

The above patient has been assessed by the named pharmacist under the Pharmacy First Service. The patient has the following symptoms and requires referral for the reason(s) indicated below:

1. Symptoms

Please give a brief outline of the patients symptoms and duration:

2. Treatment provided

Please give details of any treatments the patient has tried (include those purchased OTC and supplied via PV):

3. Reason(s) for referral

Please give details of the reasons for referral:

4. Referral to

Patient referred to (please tick):

GP practice , OOH medical centre , A & E department , Other

If other please specify:

