

Guidance on Shortages for Primary Care

What is the NI Drug Tariff?

The Northern Ireland Drug Tariff details the range of drugs and appliances that GPs, and other prescribers, can issue on the NHS. The NI Drug Tariff also sets out the range of dispensing fees available to pharmacists (remuneration), as well as detailing the reimbursement figures paid to community pharmacy contractors in respect of the actual cost of drugs and appliances supplied against health service prescription forms.

The NI Drug Tariff is produced monthly by the HSCB/Business Services Organisation (BSO) on behalf of the Department and can be accessed via the BSO website at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2034.htm>

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a shortage?

A shortage is defined as a licensed product that cannot be sourced as a generic or *proprietary* presentation for supply to a patient at any price

2. What is NOT a shortage?

A shortage is **not** where a drug is only available at more than NI Drug Tariff reimbursement price, this includes all licensed generic *and* proprietary products.

3. What should community pharmacists do when they encounter a shortage?

- I. Investigate the market as to the possible options for the patient
- II. Check the “shortages section” of the BSO website to ascertain if information has been produced, nationally, or locally, for a particular drug, and what alternatives have been suggested
<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3065.htm>
- III. Contact the prescriber with details of possible options
- IV. Depending on the nature of the shortage and the expected duration the prescriber may wish to review the patient and consider stopping the medicine or prescribing an alternative.

4. What should community pharmacists do if an unlicensed or imported product is the only option available?

- I. Advise the prescriber that the only alternative available to ensure continuity of care for the patient is an imported or unlicensed product, along with the cost of the unlicensed or imported alternative
- II. Request that the prescriber **endorses the prescription** to approve supply imported or unlicensed product

- III. Assure the prescriber that he will be **notified** when the licensed product becomes available
- IV. **Counsel the patient** regarding the imported or unlicensed product.

5. Is there a role for General Practice Pharmacists re contacting wholesalers if a patient advises that they are having “trouble” having their prescription dispensed?

No. If a patient advises that there are potential supply issues with a particular medication, advice on the situation should be sought from local community pharmacy colleagues who have established relationships with a range of wholesalers.

What should community pharmacists do when they cannot source a product from any main line or short line wholesalers at less than the NI Drug Tariff price?

If contractors cannot source a drug at the Part 1 Drug Tariff price, they should inform CPNI that the product cannot be sourced at less than the DT price, who in turn will share this information with HSCB/DH colleagues.

CPNI have developed a link on the website for the reporting of shortages which is checked on a daily basis [Medicine Shortage Reporter - Community Pharmacy NI](#)

GP practices should not be contacted to amend prescriptions to branded products. Prescriptions written generically should be coded for the generic and if a concessionary price is awarded, BSO will automatically apply this to all generics prescribed.

Footnote

EU Exit

There is significant uncertainty at time of publication (January 2021) in relation to the impact of EU Exit on the medicines supply chain within NI. This document is a “live” document, produced via discussion between HSCB, community pharmacies and General Practice Pharmacists. It will be revisited regularly to ensure that it meets the needs of the service.

Drug Tariff Developmental Work

The current process in Northern Ireland for the setting of concessionary prices for Part 1 drugs which cannot be sourced at the NI Drug Tariff price follows the

concessionary prices set by DHSC. These prices apply for 1 month only. Current concessionary prices are available at

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2510.htm>

Work is ongoing between DH/HSCB/BSO/CPNI in relation to a wider piece of work around the development of local management of the NI Drug Tariff. The process for the local setting of concessionary prices, and the timeliness of the awarding of concessionary prices, is a significant part of this developmental work.