

To:

GP Practices
OOH medical services

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24 December 2021

Dear Colleague

PHARMACY FIRST - UPDATE

We are writing to provide you with an update in relation to a number of services being provided by community pharmacies under the Pharmacy First banner.

1. Pharmacy First: Winter Conditions

The Pharmacy First Service for Winter Conditions will operate in community pharmacies from **8th November 2021 until 31st March 2022**; a summary of the service is provided in Appendix 1.

All patients registered with a GP in Northern Ireland are eligible to avail of this service with the exception of patients living in nursing or residential care homes. It is anticipated that the vast majority of pharmacies will be providing the service and a list of participating pharmacies will be available on the Primary care intranet.

Sign-posting to the service

Please do not refer patients with symptoms of COVID19 to the community pharmacy.

In order for the service to be as effective as possible it is important that GP practices and OOH medical services only refer suitable patients to the service. Patients or their representatives should be asked to phone the community pharmacist and NOT to present in person in the pharmacy.

Consultation

A consultation with the patient is undertaken by the community pharmacist. They will provide advice and treatment where appropriate.

Referral from community pharmacy following consultation

As a result of the consultation the pharmacist may, on an exceptional basis, consider that the patient requires referral to their GP practice.

The community pharmacist should agree in advance with your practice the process for dealing appropriately with individuals requiring referral. This will include sharing details of the consultation via a [referral form](#), included in Appendix 2.

Actions for GP practices and OOHs medical centres

- Inform all relevant staff including practice pharmacists and nurses of the availability of this service
- Consider how to promote this service to your patients. Posters and Patient Information Leaflets will be available in electronic format on the Primary care intranet which can be used on practice websites etc.
- Agree a process for managing any referrals from community pharmacies. The number of patients requiring referral has been very low in previous years.

2. Pharmacy First: Emergency Hormonal Contraception

A Pharmacy First Service for Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) is currently in development. The aims of the service will be to improve access to emergency contraception & sexual health advice and to help contribute to a reduction in the number of unplanned pregnancies. It is anticipated that the service will be available early in the New Year and you will receive further information in due course.

3. Pharmacy First: Minor Conditions (rebranding)

As part of the transition to Pharmacy First the current Minor Ailments (MA) service will be incorporated within the Pharmacy First suite of services and be rebranded as Pharmacy First for Minor Conditions.

There are no planned changes to the service this year, other than the name change.

Promotion of Pharmacy First Services

New promotional material for all of the Pharmacy First services is currently in development and will be shared with pharmacies and GP practices in the coming weeks. These newly designed promotional materials and a comprehensive communication strategy will help promote the service within community pharmacies, GP practices, community groups and to the general public.

If you have any queries in relation to the service please contact your local pharmacy adviser.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Brogan', positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Joe Brogan
Assistant Director of Integrated Care
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines
Management

Dr Margaret O'Brien
Assistant Director of Integrated Care
Head of GMS

CC.

Encs.