



Department of Health & Social Care

Communication: Contractual Updates and Service Changes from October for Pharmacy First, Pharmacy Contraception Service and the New Medicine Service

Dear Pharmacy Contractor,

Following the letter to contractors published 31 March 2025, the offer of clinical services in 2025/2026 is set to expand from October to offer further support to patients and the wider NHS.

The changes include the Pharmacy First clinical stocktake to incorporate updates to the Patient Group Directions (PGDs) and Clinical Pathways, the expansion of the Pharmacy Contraception Service (PCS) expanding to both include pharmacy technicians and the supply of oral emergency contraception, finally the expansion of the New Medicine Service (NMS) to include depression as a further therapeutic area.

Further information on each change is included below including indicative dates for the launch of the three key elements. Work is ongoing with IT system suppliers to make changes to their systems ahead of the commencement of the changes and further communications will be issued via the Primary Care Bulletin to confirm dates for launch in the coming weeks.

Pharmacy First Clinical Pathways - Clinical Stocktake

Following a clinical review of the clinical pathways conducted by NHS England with input from clinical experts and frontline community pharmacists, the draft updated pathways and PGDs have been published here [<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacy-first-june-2025>] to provide contractors and system suppliers with advanced notice of the changes.

Contractors should ensure all pharmacists wishing to continue delivering the Pharmacy First service have read the draft materials, that they are aware of the changes to the

Clinical Pathway element and will ensure they are competent to deliver the service according to the updated specification, PGDs and pathways from **1 October 2025**.

Pharmacy contractors are asked to remind all pharmacists the importance of accurate record keeping including the legal documentation of any medicines supplied under PGDs or via the urgent medicines supply route.

IT system suppliers will look to amend existing systems to incorporate these updates the night on the 30 September 2025 so that from **1 October 2025** the updated service can be provided in accordance with the updated service specification and associated materials. These documents will be published on the NHS England website on **1 October 2025** alongside an updated service specification.

Pharmacy Contraception Service

On **Wednesday 29 October 2025**, the Pharmacy Contraception service (PCS) will expand to include the provision of oral emergency contraception (EC). In addition, the service will be updated to allow pharmacy technicians to deliver the service from this day. These changes will be reflected in the service specification, PGDs and consultation records provided by IT system suppliers.

The updated service specification and new PGDs for levonorgestrel and ulipristal are published here [<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-pharmacy-contraception-service-june-2025>] to provide contractors and system suppliers with advanced notice of the changes. Further minor changes will be made to the PGDs (both new and existing for COC and POP), and these will be published in draft form on the NHSBSA website and will be published on the NHS England website upon launch.

Contractors should ensure all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians wishing to deliver the expanded PCS have read the draft materials, that they are aware of the changes and will ensure they are competent to deliver the service according to the updated specification and PGDs from **29 October 2025**.

Contractors who are currently registered to deliver the PCS and intend to continue delivering the service (to include oral EC), are not required to take any action regarding service registration. Contractors who are registered and do not wish to provide oral EC will be required to de-register from the existing service according to the arrangements set out in Part VIC of the Drug Tariff by **29 September**.

Contractors currently operating under a locally commissioned service that includes the provision of oral EC should ensure they are aware of any transitional arrangements for the remainder of 2025/26 and what measures the relevant local authority have put in place.

Contractors should note that de-registering from the service after 31 August 2025 will make a contractor unable to fulfil the gateway criteria for the Pharmacy Quality Scheme 2025/26, therefore any aspiration payments claimed will be reconciled at a future date. In addition, to receive the Pharmacy First Clinical Pathway fixed payment, from June 2025 requires contractors to be signed up to both the Hypertension Case-Finding Service (except Distance Selling Pharmacies (DSPs)) and PCS.

New Medicine Service

On Wednesday 29 October 2025 the NMS will expand to include depression as an eligible therapeutic area. This will be reflected in the updated service specification and NMS Eligible Drug List.

The NMS Eligible Drug List will also be updated to incorporate changes following a full review of the list of drugs for all conditions eligible for the service. This review was undertaken to ensure that the list remains up to date and allows contractors to provide the service safely and effectively. The review has removed discontinued medication, specialist only initiated medication and medication with very low levels of prescribing while adding newer medications that have been approved for each condition since the last review of the list and should not impact the opportunity for contractors to offer the service. A draft of the updated NMS Eligible Drug List and service specification are available on the NHSBSA website to provide advance notice of the changes to contractors and IT system suppliers [<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-new-medicine-service-august-2025>].

Contractors should ensure all pharmacists wishing to continue delivering the service have read the draft materials, are aware of the changes, and are competent to deliver the service according to the updated service specification and NMS Eligible Drug List from 29 October 2025.

Contractors who opt to use an IT system to maintain appropriate clinical records for the service should look out for communications from their IT supplier or discuss these changes with their supplier and confirm that their IT system will be updated to fully support service delivery from 29 October 2025.

Health campaigns for 2025/26

In addition, a Health Campaign focusing on Pharmacy First is expected to run later in 2025/26, with dates to be confirmed.

All pharmacies will need to participate in this campaign, using relevant materials to promote Pharmacy First to the public. This will take place alongside an NHS England campaign aimed at the wider public. Further details on how contractors must engage in the campaign will be published shortly.

Kind regards,

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