

Covid-19 – Changes to Repeat Prescribing Ordering Systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has coincided with the commencement of changes to the process for ordering repeat medication. From 1 April pharmacies were due to begin to cease ordering medication on behalf of patients. This has already started in many areas and is going well for patients who can order their medication online.

However, with the recent government advice for those over the age of 70 to self-isolate, the 'soft launch' date for these changes has now been delayed until 1 September 2020. Pharmacists can continue to order medication for all patients until then.

Further information will follow at a later date concerning the final date for the change in this process.

There are a number of options GP Practices can consider:

Electronic Repeat Dispensing

- Practices should **consider putting all suitable patients on electronic repeat dispensing as soon as possible**. The whole repeatable prescription can be valid for a year but each repeat should be for no longer than the patient has now. For example, if the patient has prescriptions for a month's supply now then the repeat dispensing should be set up as 13 x 28 days' supply.
- For suitable patients Electronic Repeat dispensing (ErD) Practices should **not change their repeat prescription durations** or support patients trying to stockpile: these actions may put a strain on the supply chain and exacerbate any potential shortages.

EPS (electronic repeat prescriptions)

- There is a facility through EPS (electronic repeat prescriptions) for GP Practices to forward date prescriptions for the next three months. Please do **NOT** increase the quantity of the actual items on the prescription as this will potentially lead to an increase in stock issues.

This ensures patients will automatically receive their prescriptions every month.

Telephone prescribing

There is no mandate against the use of telephone ordering of repeat prescriptions. Therefore, during these challenging times GP Practices could arrange to put in place a telephone repeat order service for a specific period each day if they felt this would be helpful.

This will also help GP Practices concerned about the possible reduction in staff and subsequent impact on their practice. The only exception to this would be if the patient isn't stable. The majority of self-isolating patients can order their prescriptions quickly and easily using their GP online systems or the NHS App. For those who have trouble using online services and don't have a family member, friend or carer able to order prescriptions on their behalf, these patients are classed as 'housebound' under the vulnerable patient criteria. GP Practices need to follow the guidance attached for vulnerable patients and liaise with the pharmacy to ensure these patients continue to receive assistance. Pharmacies can continue to order prescriptions on behalf of vulnerable patients. Can any GP Practice receiving objections to this way of working from pharmacies, please inform us and we will contact the pharmacy to try to resolve.

For those patients able to drop their prescriptions into GP practices perhaps consider putting a post box at the practice entrance. This will help to minimise the number of patients walking into GP Practice.