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Provision of Multi-compartment Compliance Aids (MCA) to patients living in the community

The COVID-19 pandemic poses one of the biggest challenges that community pharmacy has ever faced. Pharmacies will start to lose team members either through infection, self-isolation or parental / caring responsibilities and as you are aware, the dispensing and checking of community MCAs is a highly labour-intensive task.

As part of business continuity planning, all patients therefore need to be assessed to determine the level of risk posed to the individual by removing the service (low / medium / high). An Equality Act assessment¹ may also be required to determine any additional support necessary in relation to their long-term disability.

For patients who are low risk, it would be prudent to start removing this service as soon as possible, by moving to supply in original packs, thus freeing up capacity to enable the pharmacy team to start assessments with patients who are in the medium risk group.

The local community that each pharmacy serves will have its own individual composition and therefore, the outcomes will be different for each one. It is therefore important that every pharmacy starts the review from the perspective of:

If I have less than half of my workforce, or no dispensers then who will have to go without?

This process is not about removing the service from all patients, but protecting the most vulnerable in society who need it.

To support the patient review process, a template letter (see page 2) has been provided for pharmacies to share with their patients explaining the reasons behind the review and emphasising that this is about ensuring that all patients receive the care they require in these challenging times. A Microsoft Word version of the template letter is also available to download from the PSNC website, via the [COVID-19 hub page](#).

¹ Patient Assessment For Medicines Compliance Support: <https://psnc.org.uk/avon-lpc/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2019/03/assessment-tool-for-compliance-aids-nhs-north-bristol.pdf>

Appendix: Template letter to share with patients

Dear

I am writing to let you know about XX pharmacy's plans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you probably know, the virus has caused extra pressure on all parts of the health service, including GPs and hospitals. Community pharmacy is no different. Our responsibilities are to make sure that all our patients continue to receive their medicines in a safe and effective way, and to take some pressure from GPs by helping more people treat minor illnesses themselves.

In order that every patient can be cared for at this exceptionally busy time, pharmacies have been asked to review all the additional services they provide, as their workforce is likely to become reduced in the coming weeks.

As a result, you will receive your next supply of medicines in the manufacturer's original packs with a pre-printed reminder chart, instead of a 'blister pack'.

This is in line with current best practice guidelines from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

I hope you understand that this is one of several measures being taken in these extreme circumstances, so we can continue to provide safe care for all patients who use our pharmacy.

If you have significant concerns about this, please contact us.

Yours faithfully