



t 0203 1220 810
e info@psnc.org.uk
w psnc.org.uk

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Care Home Patients

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 care home multi-compartment compliance aids (MCA) is a highly labour-intensive task.

As part of business continuity planning, all care homes should be contacted to assess the level of risk (low / medium / high) to the care home posed by moving to original pack dispensing plus a MAR chart. Key to the success of this change will be holding an open and honest discussion with the home management to understand the complexity this will bring.

For homes who are accepting of the change, it would be prudent to start changing this service as soon as possible, thus freeing up capacity to work with other more complex homes to find suitable solutions. It would also be good practice to include a periodic review plus an assessment of impact as business returns to normal after the pandemic.

The care homes that each pharmacy serves will have their 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 which homes will go without?

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

To support the home review process, a template letter (see page 2) has been provided for pharmacies to share with their care homes 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](#).

Appendix: Template letter to send to care homes

Dear

I am writing to update you on our pharmacy COVID-19 pandemic business continuity plan.

As you are aware, the escalation of cases in the UK has meant increased pressure on all primary care services, including community pharmacy. Our core responsibilities are to ensure that all patients receive their medication in a safe and effective way.

Our national representative body for NHS community pharmacies, the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC), has issued guidance that all pharmacies should review the services they provide to care homes to ensure they can protect the whole medicines supply chain. It advises that pharmacies should assess their ability to offer services to care homes if they have a reduced workforce, due to staff absences.

To support this recommendation, we are therefore proposing that from your next medication cycle and, until such time as COVID-19 is no longer a significant threat, your care home will receive medication in manufacturers' original packs with pre-printed Medication Administration Record charts to allow you to record medication administered.

This measure is also in line with current best practice guidelines from the Care Quality Commission¹, who identify several reports that suggest multi-compartment compliance aids do not reduce medication errors.

I hope you understand that this measure is being taken in these extreme circumstances to protect all patients who access services from this pharmacy.

Yours faithfully

¹ <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/multi-compartment-compliance-aids-mcas-care-homes> [accessed 16th March 2020]