

POLICE SERVICE ADVICE FOR PHARMACIES

POLICE ADVICE FOR PHARMACIES DURING COVID19

The Police Service across the UK recognises the impact that COVID-19 continues to have on the procedures and protocols regarding the distribution, storage, and dispensation of controlled drugs such as methadone, in relation to retail pharmacies. Policing is working hard to understand the challenges and associated criminal opportunities in order to provide support and help manage those risks through positive engagement and regular provision of crime prevention advice. We are in the process of encouraging all local police patrol routes to include pharmacies where possible, and for local neighbourhood policing teams and Controlled Drugs Liaison Officers to be proactive in engaging.

To give you an example of something we have done recently. It was made known to us in early March, that in some cases retail pharmacies were having to order and then store larger quantities of these drugs albeit on a less frequent basis, where in some cases it may be in contravention of regulation 3 of the Safe Custody Regulations 1973 which requires retail pharmacies to store such controlled substances like methadone in “a locked safe, cabinet or room which is so constructed and maintained as to prevent unauthorised access to drugs”.

We are pleased to see that many retail pharmacies in this position are working hard to keep these substances in the most secure possible way and out of sight from patients, accepting that they need to do everything in their power to ensure the safe and secure handling and storage of controlled substances to ensure patient safety and maintain public protection.

We understand that many pharmacies up and down the country quite rightly want the reassurance from policing that it will take a reasonable and supportive approach over the next 2 months subject to regular and periodic reviews. Even though Chief Constables and Commissioners (London) have complete independence on the level and style of operational policing delivered locally, the National Police Chief's Council lead for Drugs has written to all Chief Constables/Commissioners for Police this week, explaining the situation and asking all policing leaders to take a supportive approach in your endeavours.

We recognise this will be an anxious time so we have prepared a security advice document, which provides the steps you can take to protect your staff and business. There is a single page summary document and a second detailed advice document.

- S** Staff - Train, support and talk to your staff about the information in this document
- T** Take a note of every incident no matter how small and report crime to the police
- A** Assess the security of your premises, inside and out and have an up-to-date premises security risk assessment
- Y** You can seek further advice from the Master Locksmith Association and Metropolitan Police Service
- S** Signage - set clear rules and make it clear which are staff only areas
- A** Advise staff to lock unused rooms and be vigilant
- F** Follow pre planned open & close routines
- E** Ensure drugs are locked away in a security rated cabinet and behind several layers of security.

WELL BEING OF STAFF

Brief your staff about the contents of this document emphasising the importance of not inadvertently drawing attention that additional quantities of controlled drugs may be being kept on the premises or when deliveries are expected.

The safety and wellbeing of staff is paramount. Violence or abuse against staff is never acceptable and should not be tolerated. If you've witnessed, or have been the victim of a crime please report it, as it will help Police to bring the offender to justice, prevent further crime and keep people safe.

Always trust your instincts and maximise the distance between you and anyone who is aggressive. Once the person has left the premises, record a description and report this to police as soon as possible. In an emergency always call 999.

Keeping a written log of suspicious activity is invaluable to the police in the event of a crime taking place.

Ask your staff to help identify vulnerabilities of the business, they may have a different perspective of the potential risks.

Keep an up-to-date record of staff contact details and their nominated point of contact.

SECURITY OF PREMISES

To identify the risks to your business premises it is a good idea to think about the kind of incidents you may have experienced in the past. Walk around the inside and outside your premises to identify where your vulnerabilities are. In London, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime have produced a guide on how to carry out a security self-assessment. In other parts of the country there is similar advice available, either through the local police force or the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/safe_spaces_self-accreditation_scheme_-_survey_tool.pdf

Test your locks, shutters, grilles, windows and doors are working properly. If they are not working properly get them repaired or replaced by an approved contractor who uses Police accredited products. A list of police approved companies can be found here:

<https://www.securedbydesign.com/member-companies/accredited-product-search>

As you walk around your store think about where your most secure area is. Then consider what additional security measures could be introduced. For example: fitting additional locks to existing doors, as adding a second lock will improve the resistance of the door and will make it harder for someone to break in to. There are products available which can be fitted to the door frame (London Bar) and hinges (Birmingham Bar), to reinforce them. Whilst a professionally installed and maintained alarm is desirable, there are also wired and non-wired audible alarms and sensors which can be fitted to doors and windows.

Roof lights and windows can be vulnerable points. Openings can be reinforced by fitting additional locks and supplemented with audible alarm sensors and glazing can be reinforced using a laminate film to coat the inner side of the glass. There are various types of film offering different levels of security.

Ensure internal and external lights are working and replace any bulbs. If you are considering installing external lighting then dawn till dusk system is recommended.

ALARMS & CCTV

If a burglar or panic alarm is fitted, it should be tested regularly so you can be confident you will get an appropriate response when necessary. There are many types of professionally fitted alarm options available including some that are remotely monitored. If you want to have an alarm installed, use a company registered with the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) formally NACOSS or SSAIB.

CCTV systems can act as a deterrent to crime and may assist in the investigation and prosecution in the event of an incident. It is important staff know how to operate the equipment as a delay could hold up an investigation.

If you have CCTV cameras installed, check the cameras are working, the lenses are clean and are not obstructed by merchandise or anything else. The cameras should be positioned on your vulnerable areas and stock.

CCTV cameras should provide good quality images and positioned to cover as much of the store as possible, including the area in which your drugs are stored.

We recommend CCTV systems should be professionally installed and serviced regularly however, there are also off the shelf CCTV systems which can be viewed remotely using a mobile phone app and allow two-way communication using a speaker. The cameras are triggered by movement sensors alerting you of a breaking in, so you can call police. Some systems offer cloud based storage making it an attractive short term, cost-effective DIY solution. We recommend changing default passwords to protect your personal data. For more information about device and cyber security visit:

<https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/fa/fraud/online-fraud/cyber-crime-fraud/>

ENTRANCE POINTS

If there are multiple entrance points in to your premises during opening hours, consider if any of these can be restricted or closed off. Being able to control entrance doors, electronically or manually, allows you to have control of who can enter your store.

COMMUNICATION

Always have a means of communication with you, such as a mobile phone, two-way radio or a panic alarm. This equipment is useless unless it is regularly tested, turned on and is worn or with you at all times. Some areas around the country operate a radio scheme as part of a Business Crime Reduction Partnership or Business Improvement District.

PUBLIC vs PRIVATE

Keep doors to private areas or rooms, including those used for consultations, locked when they are not in use. Consider the benefits of a simple door contact alarm, to cabinets or doors as they will sound if unexpectedly opened or not shut properly.

Display signs to make it clear which areas are private and are off limits to customers.

Keep the main desk or counter area free of personal belongings or valuables including mobile phones. Lock them away, or keep them out of sight.

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BLIND SPOTS

Try to avoid creating blind spots on the shop floor. Remove any obstructions or reposition merchandise which may prevent your staff having a clear view around the shop, entrance door and if possible, outside your premises.

If you still have blind spots, is there anything you can do to improve these areas such as repositioning a CCTV camera to cover it? Alternatively, can you temporarily seal the area off from the public?

Adding security mirrors will enable your staff to have more visibility around the store and may reduce blind spots.

VULNERABLE AREAS

Ask your staff to pay extra attention to any areas of the shop you have identified as vulnerable, especially where high value or attractive stock is displayed. Alternatively, move the stock to another location, or reduce the amount of stock you keep on open display.

Never attempt to lock a shoplifter in the shop. This is dangerous.

Call the Police.

WORKING LATE

Stay safe when you are working late - always keep in constant communication with someone who knows where you are.

If you are the only person working, stay in touch with a colleague, your boss, or family members so they are aware of where you are and that you are safe.

If there is security staff on duty, let them know that you are in the building. You can also ask them to check on you every so often.

CUSTOMERS & DELIVERIES

Restricting the number of customers you allow into your premises is important and your staff will have a key role in managing this. Some businesses allow a limited number of customers in at a time to maintain social distancing and protect staff.

Placing a sign on the entrance door informing customers that you are operating a policy of restricting access will reduce customer frustration. If you have the ability to lock the door remotely or manually this too will help you control entry in to your premises.

Remember criminals and opportunist thieves are sophisticated in their ability to deceive staff. Remain alert and try not to stereotype what a criminal looks like, as they can take any appearance.

Be mindful of criminal distraction techniques, especially during deliveries.

In advance of deliveries try to prepare storage areas by relocating any stock that does not need to be within the secure storage area or are deemed lower risk.

Keep the aisles or approach to the storage area clutter free allowing enough space for the delivery storage containers to be quickly stacked away safely out of public view.

Keep the inventory or delivery paperwork separately, so you can accurately report any items to the police if they are stolen.

When dispensing the controlled drug do this out of public view so the patient doesn't see where you are getting it from.

Where possible ensure the door to the storage area is not left open apart from when entering and then when exiting the space

Don't be afraid close to the public for a few minutes if you need to, just remember place a note on the door for customers.

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CONTROLLED DRUG (CD) AND CABINETS

These should not be used to store non-controlled drugs, such as prescription medication, or cash. This effectively limits the reason for access, and the Responsible Pharmacist (RP) will then be the only person who requires access to the cabinet.

- Keep CDs out of sight of public counter areas.
- Do not inadvertently draw attention to additional quantities of drugs on the premises.
- Undertake random stock and balance checks, including Methadone, Methylphenidate, Morphine and Fentanyl.
- Check the contents of the CD cabinet against the CD register.
- Undertake random balance checks of Out of Date controlled drug stock and Patient Returned Drugs and ensure that these are stored securely. You can denature your patient returned drugs & in some areas, you can apply to NHSE to denature your Schedule 2 CD stock. This again will free up space inside your cabinet. Please use appropriate denaturing kits & dispose 24hrs later in your yellow waste.
- Do not leave unattended CDs on work surfaces i.e. made-up prescriptions awaiting collection/delivery. If CDs are on a work surface, the RP must be standing next them, and must be directly supervising them - otherwise they should be inside the CD cabinet awaiting collection/delivery.
- Use electronic stock ordering systems to minimise the volume of drugs held on the premises at any one time.
- Encourage patients to use the electronic prescription system wherever possible to restrict the number of patients entering the pharmacy.

DAILY SUPERVISION OF DRUG TAKING (e.g. Methadone)

The decision to move away from Daily Supervision must be made by the patients' prescriber; this could be their key worker/nurse or General Practitioner (GP). This is not a decision for the RP. This brings the heightened risk of patients over consuming their medication and immediately seeking an alternative substance, there is also the heightened risk of patients falling off their programme of controlled substitute. This may have an impact on the safety of pharmacy staff, and on the wider community.

- Where staff members feel that they are at risk of immediate harm they should contact the police on 999.
- In all other cases, staff should report non-emergency incidents to the police via Single Online Home website www.police.uk
- Where patient safeguarding issues arise, the RP should signpost the patient back to their prescriber.

S T A Y S A F E

OPENING & CLOSING

Opening and closing the shop presents risks, so adapt your procedure. Stay alert and try to have a minimum of two members of staff at opening and closing times. Agree a memorable code word or signal to alert each other of a potential hazard. Trust your instincts and don't put yourself in danger call 999.

Ensure any drugs or high-risk medication is locked in a security rated safe which is either bolted to the floor or secured to the wall. If there is not sufficient storage space within the safe, any excess controlled drugs should be stored out of view and if possible in another lockable cupboard, cabinet or a locked room. The more layers of security you create between where the drugs are stored, the more difficult you will make the drugs to steal.

Any additional measures you can take to introduce more layers or barriers to protect your stock will help. For example; by storing fewer quantities together in the same place you are potentially reducing the volume of loss. If they can be hidden or disguised then it will make it harder for the criminal to find.

Leaving the lights on will maximise visibility throughout the shop from the outside during the hours of darkness.

Keys and other valuables should be locked away or out of sight.

Always set the alarm lock-up and leave the building secure. In addition to products mentioned earlier in this document there is another portable device which can be used to wedge any inward opening door shut. This device is called a Door Jammer and will make it harder for the door to be forced open:

<https://www.securedbydesign.com/about-us/news/doorjammer-secures-police-accreditation>

SECURED BY DESIGN

If you are interested in upgrading the security in your premises, all Police approved products and services including reputable CCTV installers can be found on the Secured by Design website:

<https://www.securedbydesign.com/>

WHEN TO CALL 999

- Call 999 when it feels like the situation could get violent
- The crime is in progress
- Someone is in immediate danger
- You need help right away.

OTHERWISE YOU SHOULD REPORT IT ONLINE.

FURTHER GUIDANCE AVAILABLE ON THE NEXT PAGE

REMAIN VIGILANT AND REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS - IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 999

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999 or 101?

The following section provides information about how to contact the police and what information they will want from you. For the operator to help you it is important to speak slowly, clearly and be prepared to spell words or names. Have a pen and paper to hand to record any information the operator may give you.

Call 999 when:

- It feels like the situation could get violent
- The crime is in progress
- Someone is in immediate danger
- You need help right away.

IF NOT AN EMERGENCY, REPORT ONLINE

WWW.POLICE.UK

KEY INFORMATION REQUIRED

TELL US:

- Location of the incident,
- Business Name
- Address and Postcode

ALSO:

- Information about where you are in the building and if there is a barrier such as a locked door or gate the officers will need to be aware of to reach you.
- Is anyone at immediate risk?
- Is the suspect still on scene? If not, where are they?
- Has any violence been used or threatened?
- Have any weapons been seen or threatened? If so, describe the type of weapon
- Describe any injuries.
- Provide your name and phone number so that the police can call you back. Try to avoid providing a switchboard number.

DESCRIPTIONS

Tell the operator how many people are involved and where they are, if different to your location.

If the suspects have already left the scene, describe the direction of travel and how long ago they left.

Provide a physical description of each suspect including:

- Name (if known)
- Approximate Age
- Gender
- Colour
- Approximate Height
- Build
- Hair style, colour and length
- Description of clothing worn or anything they are carrying.
- Have any weapons been seen? If so, describe them.
- Vehicle details including the vehicle registration mark (VRM), colour, make, model and the direction of travel.

If you want to report a crime anonymously call Crimestoppers on:

0800 555 111

or you can report it anonymously online with Crimestoppers:

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information>

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