



Briefing for pharmacy teams – the Pharmacy Contraception Service

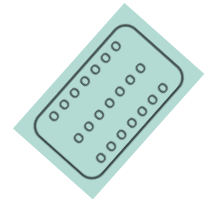
This Community Pharmacy England Briefing provides information for pharmacy teams on the Pharmacy Contraception Service (PCS) which was commissioned from pharmacies from 24th April 2023 and has recently been updated.

Aim of the service

The aim of the PCS is to offer greater choice from where people can access contraception services and create additional capacity in primary care and sexual health clinics to support meeting the demand for more complex assessments.

Brief overview of the service

- This NHS service will involve community pharmacists initiating oral contraception (OC) and providing ongoing monitoring and supply of routine OC.
- The supplies will be authorised via a Patient Group Direction (PGD), with appropriate checks, such as the measurement of the person's blood pressure and body mass index (BMI), being undertaken, where necessary.
- This is a free NHS service which will be provided face-to-face in the consultation room or remotely (either by telephone or live audio/video link).
- The consultation must be provided by a pharmacist, except for the BMI and blood pressure measurements, which may be conducted by suitably trained and competent pharmacy staff in advance of the pharmacist consultation.
- The service can be offered directly to people presenting in the pharmacy with NHS prescriptions for OC, following a consultation with the pharmacist for emergency oral contraception or by receiving signposted referrals from local general practices, sexual health clinics or other NHS organisations.
- With the patient's consent, information relating to the consultation will be shared with their general practice. However, if the person does not consent to sharing information with their general practice or they are not registered with a general practice, the consultation can still proceed, and a notification to the practice will not need to be sent.
- Pharmacy owners must have a standard operating procedure (SOP) in place for this service and all pharmacy staff involved in the provision of any aspect of the service must be familiar with and adhere to the SOP.



What role can I play in the service?



The whole pharmacy team can be involved in promoting this service and can recruit people to the service. The pharmacy team can also be involved in agreeing the date and time of the person's consultation. Suitably trained and competent pharmacy staff can also provide BMI and blood pressure measurements.



Top tips for providing the NHS Pharmacy Contraception Service

The below tips have been provided by pharmacy teams providing other nationally commissioned Advanced services and also those involved in the pilot of the Pharmacy Contraception Service.

Challenge 1: The person says they don't want the service

People may be reluctant to receive services for a variety of reasons, including lack of time or feeling that they don't need help beyond that given by their GP. Try some of the following:



- ✓ **Don't force it:** If a person says they don't have time for the service, don't treat this as a problem and instead give the person a leaflet to take away and suggest they might like to come in another time.
- ✓ **Go beyond the GP:** Some people feel they can ask GPs for any advice needed, so explaining how the service supports GPs' work and helps reduce their workload can help.
- ✓ **Think about your terminology:** People may be more receptive to the offer of "collecting your pill without having to visit the GP surgery and having a chat about it" but may be put off by words like 'service' and 'review'. Emphasising that services are free NHS services can also help.
- ✓ **People are busy:** People may not be interested in receiving a service if it's going to take a long time, so consider using phrases like "There's no need for an appointment" (if you are offering the service on a walk-in basis) or "It means you can have your check-up and collect your pill at the pharmacy without having to contact your GP surgery".
- ✓ **Sell the benefits:** Emphasise the potential benefit of the service and sharing your own experience to demonstrate, for example, if you or other members of staff have used a service that is offered at the pharmacy, can help.

Challenge 2: I'm not sure how to promote the service

- ✓ **Use the available promotional materials:** To promote the availability of the service to people, a poster (for pharmacy owners to print) and digital marketing resources are available in the resources section at cpe.org.uk/pcs.
- ✓ **Creating your own promotional materials:** Remember if you decide to develop your own marketing materials, they must comply with the requirements of the [Terms of Service](#) relating to the promotion of services funded by the NHS.
- ✓ **Using the NHS identity:** If you decide to develop your own marketing materials and want to use the NHS identity, ensure the [guidelines on the use of the NHS](#) identity are adhered to.
- ✓ **Word of mouth:** When you have provided the service, ask patients to tell their friends and family about the service too (if appropriate) – word of mouth is a great way to promote the service.
- ✓ **Use technology:** Do you use a text messaging service or social media to promote your pharmacy services? If so, you could highlight the availability of the free service. Add a message onto your telephone call holding message. Run a PMR search for any patients who

have received contraceptives from your pharmacy in the last 6 months to help identify potential service users.

- ✓ **Advertising slips:** These can be attached to prescription bags to prompt a conversation to highlight or promote the service when handing out medicines for people identified as previously having had an oral contraceptive dispensed; these are available at cpe.org.uk/pcs.
- ✓ **Other pharmacy services you could promote or use to promote this service:** Think about what other services you provide at your pharmacy and could link into this service:
 - Could you check if the person is eligible for a free NHS flu vaccination or would like to get a private flu vaccination?
 - Do you have any locally commissioned services that you are providing that the person may be interested in?
 - When a person attends the pharmacy or makes contact for other services, e.g. to access a supply of emergency oral contraception, the PCS can be highlighted to them to consider their ongoing contraception requirements.



Challenge 3: I'm too busy to stand at the counter looking for people!

- ✓ **Use your team:** Only pharmacists can provide the consultation (suitably trained and competent pharmacy staff are able to provide BMI and blood pressure measurements), but you can use your whole team to promote the service, help to identify eligible individuals, recruit them, potentially book appointments (if you are using a booking system in your pharmacy).
- ✓ **Make the most of your PMR system:** The PMR will provide you with details such as a patient's age and the medicines they are taking, so this may assist you with identifying people eligible to use the service.



- ✓ **Organise training:** Brief training for staff is likely to be valuable to ensure they all understand and feel confident talking about how the service works and how they can be involved in the service.

Challenge 4: How can I reach people who don't collect their own medicines?

- ✓ **Take-home materials:** Consider adding a flyer or information leaflet in the bag.
- ✓ **Be flexible:** Consider offering appointments and walk-in appointments to offer the greatest flexibility to people.

Challenge 5: How can I balance unpredictable workloads with appointments?

- ✓ **Plan your days:** Booking appointments for times when the pharmacy tends to be less busy, or more than one pharmacist will be on the premises. This may well be something you do already, but it can help. Pharmacies vary, but many pharmacy owners find that before 11am is the quietest time, and that patients collecting prescriptions at this time are more willing to wait; others avoid booking appointments over the 'lunch rush' when people collect prescriptions during their lunch break.
- ✓ **Talk to people:** If a person books in for an appointment, explain that you will do your best to see them on time but that occasionally you will have to deal with an urgent request from

another patient which could cause a brief delay; this will help manage a person's expectations.

- ✓ **Be clear on timing:** People must not feel rushed, and they need time to ask any questions they have about the service, but there are steps you can take to ensure that consultations are not inappropriately long. Try managing expectations by setting out an approximate or maximum timeframe at the beginning, e.g. "This shouldn't take longer than fifteen minutes"; use 'closing signals' such as standing up to indicate that the appointment is coming to an end; and make sure staff know what sort of urgent circumstances they should limit interruptions to.
- ✓ **Be clear on which other local pharmacies provide the service:** Where you are unable to meet the appointment requirements of an individual, signpost them to another local pharmacy.

Challenge 6: People forget appointments and don't turn up!

If you decide to use a booking system, it can be frustrating if people don't turn up for their appointments. Try some of the following:

- ✓ **Remind them:** Giving people an appointment card or other written reminder of their planned appointment can be helpful, as can reading back times and details if it is being booked on the phone. You could also consider phoning individuals the day before their appointment to confirm they are still able to attend.
- ✓ **Embrace technology:** If a person has booked an appointment, you could remind them about this beforehand with an email or a text message.
- ✓ **Talk to them:** Let them know that it's ok if they need to cancel or change their appointment, but that you'd really appreciate it if they could let you know if they are not able to attend the appointment as you may then be able to offer this appointment to someone else.



Challenge 7: My local GPs just aren't interested in the service

GPs can be difficult to win over when it comes to pharmacy services, sometimes because they're under too much pressure to be interested, and sometimes because they don't see the value. Keep these facts in mind in any dealings with them and try the following:



- ✓ **Think about the team:** There is more to a GP practice than just the doctors and some pharmacies have successfully promoted other services by talking to practice nurses, clinical pharmacists, practice managers and others; you could even give them leaflets to hand out about the service.
- ✓ **Work together:** In many cases there will be several pharmacies seeing patients from any practice so talk to one another – a joint approach could be far more successful and will save the GPs time.
- ✓ **Value their time:** We know that GPs are busy and feel under pressure, so try to find a time that will suit them to talk about the service rather than dropping it on them in the middle of

surgery hours. You could ask for a short speaking slot at a practice meeting, for example. Explain to the practice how they can refer people to you.

- ✓ **Don't undersell yourself:** It can feel uncomfortable telling people about how well you have done, but if you don't convince GPs about the value of services, they'll never buy into them. Try telling them some of your success stories where patients have seen a significant benefit from services.
- ✓ **Keep track of your joint successes with this service:** How many people have been identified and how many are now using regular contraception because of the joint work between your pharmacy and the practice?
- ✓ **Be concise:** Appropriate feedback and referral back to GPs can help cement the benefits of services in their minds, so keep feedback concise and limit it to issues that will be of value or interest to them.
- ✓ **Ask their opinions:** GPs are more likely to accept something if they have had some say over it, so ask your GPs for feedback on the service.
- ✓ **Keep up the momentum:** If referrals from a practice are low, or start to dwindle, speak to them again – sometimes occasional reinforcement is all that's needed to keep referrals routine.
- ✓ **Train together:** Consider holding shared training with practice staff – this can improve both your relationships and patient care.

Challenge 8: How do I engage the local sexual health clinic(s) in the service?



Making referrals to community pharmacies may be a new approach for your local sexual health clinic. Their services are often in high demand and therefore, time to engage the team may be a challenge. Keep these facts in mind in any dealings with them and try the

following:

- ✓ **Think about the team:** Enquire who it would be best to speak to within their team about the service; you could even give them leaflets to hand out about the service.
- ✓ **Work together:** In many cases there will be several pharmacies seeing patients from the catchment area of a sexual health clinic so talk to one another – a joint approach could be far more successful and will save the clinic time.
- ✓ **Value their time:** We know that sexual health team are busy and may feel under pressure, so try to find a time that will suit them to talk about the service rather than dropping it on them in the middle of their clinic hours. You could ask for a short speaking slot at a team meeting, for example. Explain to the team how they can make referral to you.
- ✓ **Don't undersell yourself:** It can feel uncomfortable telling people about how well you have done, but if you don't convince the sexual health team about the value of services, they'll never buy into them. Try telling them some of your success stories where patients have seen a significant benefit from services you offer.
- ✓ **Keep track of your joint successes with this service:** How many people have been identified and how many are now receiving OC or other care because of the joint work between your pharmacy and the sexual health clinic?

- ✓ **Be concise:** Appropriate feedback and referral back to sexual health clinics can help cement the benefits of services in their minds, so keep feedback concise and limit it to issues that will be of value or interest to them.
- ✓ **Ask their opinions:** Other healthcare professionals are more likely to accept something if they have had some say over it, so ask your local sexual health clinic teams for feedback on the service.
- ✓ **Understand what they offer:** Use the opportunity to understand what services the sexual health clinic (or equivalent) provides and their operating hours. Enquire how best to make refers to them where appropriate.
- ✓ **Keep up the momentum:** If referrals from a clinic are low, or start to dwindle, speak to them again – sometimes occasional reinforcement is all that's needed to keep referrals routine.
- ✓ **Train together:** Consider holding or attending shared training with sexual health clinic staff, where applicable – this may improve both your relationships and patient care.

Further information on the Pharmacy Contraception Service can be found at cpe.org.uk/pcs.

If you have any queries or require more information, please contact:

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