

## Streamlining Pharmacy First referrals from general practice to community pharmacies

We are pleased to announce that from 18 June 2024, clinical IT system suppliers will commence the roll out of a new feature enabling Pharmacy First referrals from general practices using EMIS Web Local Services or PharmRefer to flow into the workflows in pharmacy clinical systems. Referrals will be received into the same workflow as Pharmacy First referrals from NHS 111 telephony and 111 online (NHS 111).

As this is a step change, GP practices that do not use EMIS Web Local Services or PharmRefer will continue to refer using NHSmail.

Community pharmacies do not need to take any action to enable the BaRS functionality, this will be enabled by clinical system suppliers. Suppliers will advise their roll-out dates directly to their customers.

This is an important first step to implement the national Booking and Referral Standard (BaRS) which will streamline referral management, reduce burden and improve patient safety by simplifying the referral pathway from general practice into community pharmacy clinical systems.

The benefits for community pharmacy from the deployment of BaRS are:

Improved patient safety:

- Enables formal referrals as opposed to informal signposting;
- Increases visibility of referrals, reducing the likelihood of referrals being missed;
- Referral information appears in assured Pharmacy First IT system workflow, taking away the need to copy and paste from emails/PDFs.

Improved patient experience:

- Provides consistent, structured information pharmacy teams need when they see patients who attend for a Pharmacy First (clinical pathways and minor illness) consultation;
- Reduces the need for patients to repeat information.

Key actions for Community Pharmacy teams

1. Ensure all relevant community pharmacy staff are aware of the change and know which system your community pharmacy will use to receive Pharmacy First referrals from NHS111 and general practice.

2. Ensure all relevant community pharmacy staff know how to use your IT system functionality. Refer to your chosen IT system supplier for:
  - a. specific guidance on system functionality,
  - b. training, and
  - c. support for standard operating procedures.
3. Continue to monitor NHSmail for all other referrals. Email remains a business continuity solution for Pharmacy First referrals from both GP practices and NHS 111 if the integrated referral method fails.

What to do if you want to switch supplier

The process to change the system the pharmacy uses to receive NHS111 and general practice referrals is as follows:

1. Pharmacies initiate the change by liaising with their preferred system supplier to start the onboarding process and complete any required training.
2. The system supplier will update the Directory of Services (DoS) 'Switch List' with the ODS code of the community pharmacy, with a proposed switch date.
3. The supplier will advise the pharmacy of the date the switch will happen. Any queries should be directed to the supplier.
4. DoS and national BaRS teams will review the Switch Log and action the switch on the proposed switch date.
5. From the switch date, the pharmacy will begin to receive NHS111 and general practice referrals into the new system.

Switches are subject to pharmacy meeting all criteria, including having an NHSmail shared email address and being registered for Pharmacy First.

Further information on BaRS available [here](#).