



Briefing: 023/25:

October 2025

Briefing for general practice teams and staff at sexual health clinics: Changes to the NHS Pharmacy Contraception Service

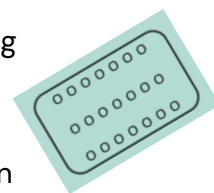
This Community Pharmacy England Briefing provides information for general practice teams and staff at sexual health clinics on the changes to the Pharmacy Contraception Service (PCS) which are planned to be introduced in October 2025.

Aims of the service

The aim of the service continues to be to offer greater choice from where people can access contraception services and create additional capacity in general practice and sexual health clinics (or equivalent) to support meeting the demand for more complex assessments.

Brief overview of the changes to the service

- This NHS service will now be provided by community pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.
- The service will now involve initiating oral contraception (OC), providing ongoing monitoring and supply of routine OC and providing free oral EC to individuals of childbearing potential, where appropriate, to reduce the risk of pregnancy after unprotected sexual intercourse or where regular contraception has been compromised or used incorrectly.
- The service will be provided face-to-face (in the consultation room at the pharmacy). Distance selling premises pharmacies (DSPs) are not permitted to provide face-to-face consultations with patients present at the pharmacy premises.
- Consultations can be provided remotely by all participating pharmacies (including DSP pharmacies), where the individual requests this and the pharmacist or pharmacy technician assesses it is clinically appropriate. Remote consultations may be conducted by telephone or live video link.
- Consultations must be directly with the person accessing the service, and for whom the medication is for.
- The inclusion of oral EC in the service supports the provision of consistent access from community pharmacies across England to free OC and oral EC for individuals of childbearing potential. This removes variation seen in locally commissioned services.
- The inclusion of oral EC in the service provides another avenue to assist with tackling health inequalities through providing wider access to contraception services.



- OC can only be provided to individuals where the requirement is for contraceptive purposes. The inclusion criteria for the service do not include other uses such as the management of bleeding, management of acne etc. Supplies of OC for individuals using them for non-contraceptive purposes will need to continue to be managed in general practice.
- As part of the service expansion, Drospirenone has been added to the progesterone only pill patient group direction and may, therefore, be supplied through the service.
- The oral contraceptives that can be supplied are defined by NHS England in the PGDs and pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are recommended to supply the best value product to meet the clinical need of the individual. Local integrated care board formularies/restrictions will also be referred to and followed accordingly.

What notifications will be sent to general practice and how will these be sent?

If the person provides consent to share the outcome of the consultation with their general practice, the following information will be shared: patient and pharmacy details; date of consultation; blood pressure reading (where applicable); BMI (where applicable); quantity and name of medicine supplied; consultation outcome and if applicable, why no supply was made.



The notifications will be sent as a structured message in real-time by the pharmacy's NHS-approved clinical services IT system.

Can general practice and sexual health clinics refer people to the service if they are requesting an appointment to initiate an OC, they are requesting repeat supplies of their OC or require EC?

Yes. The service can be offered directly to people presenting in participating pharmacies or by receiving signposted referrals from local general practices and sexual health clinics (or equivalent).

Is the pharmacy able to provide the service for all the hours that the pharmacy is open?

The provision of oral EC will generally be available across all the hours that the pharmacy is open. However, pharmacy owners can identify the hours and/or days they will provide the OC elements of this service. The pharmacy's NHS website profile will be updated to indicate that the service is provided and pharmacies may confirm the availability of the service with local stakeholders as part of local conversations if they intend to receive referrals.

Is there a formal referral route to refer these individuals to the service?

No. Individuals do not need to be formally referred; instead, they can be signposted to a pharmacy offering the service.

Is there any additional information that needs to be sent when signposting individuals to the service?

If the individual had previously been initiated on OC in a sexual health clinic and no record of supply was shared with the person's general practice, then it is recommended that a message is sent to the pharmacy using NHSmail.





The message should include information about the OC previously supplied to allow the pharmacist or pharmacy technician to provide continuity of supply. However, there is no need to provide this information for signposting from general practice, as the pharmacist or pharmacy technician will be able to confirm any previously initiated OC via the individual's National Care Record.

What happens if the pharmacist or pharmacy technician has a clinical concern or is unable to provide an OC or oral EC?

If a supply of OC or oral EC is not deemed clinically appropriate, the pharmacist or pharmacy technician will explain why this is the case to the person and refer them to their general practice or sexual health clinic (or equivalent).



Is there any information that pharmacies may find useful to support their provision of the service?

As part of the consultation, the pharmacist or pharmacy technician will have a discussion with the individual regarding alternative and more effective forms of contraception and EC including promotion of Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC). It would be helpful for pharmacies to understand where individuals requiring LARC, including the fitting of a copper intrauterine device, can be referred to and to have some indication of how quickly people are seen when referred to the service.

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 speak to a participating local pharmacy or contact: services.team@cpe.org.uk.

