

Sent by email

Regatta Place
Summers Road
Liverpool
L3 4BL

Email - england.lscpharmacy@nhs

19 January 2022

Dear Pharmacy Contractor

Re: Unscheduled and temporary closures

As you are all aware the Omicron virus is now prevalent in the North West with hotspots of infection in areas of Lancashire and South Cumbria. The Integrated Care System for Lancashire and South Cumbria is currently trying to manage the covid staffing situation across multiple providers. There is increased pressure on all of our contractors due to staff self-isolating with covid and locum availability.

NHS England and Improvement (NHSEI) recognises the difficulties that pharmacies are facing as staff absences increase and issues with locum shortages/reliability. NHSEI has made allowances for staff shortages via the Pharmaceutical Regulations (Schedule 4, para 27) to enable pharmacies to make application to NHSEI for temporary closures which may be in the form of reduced opening times or complete closure. NHSEI will review any application made and will allow flexibility if the circumstances indicate that is the correct action to take. I have attached the temporary closure form for any pharmacy who wish to apply to NHSEI for a temporary closure.

Unscheduled closures are generally of short duration where key members of staff have not turned up for work and the pharmacy is forced to close until alternative arrangements can be made. Normally in these circumstances NHSEI would only require an unscheduled closures form to be submitted by the pharmacy to our generic email box england.lscpharmacy@nhs.net after the closure. However, as the situation is not "normal" NHSEI will require pharmacies to take the following actions:

1. Notify NHSEI using the england.lscpharmacy@nhs.net email address as soon as you are aware that the pharmacy cannot be opened and the reasons why.
2. NHSEI will then notify the CCG so that they can notify the GP practices.
3. Contact the Drug Misuse Service if providing supervised consumption.
4. Pharmacy staff should be available on site to take any calls from patients and to answer the door if patients wish to speak to someone in the pharmacy about their prescription/medication.
5. A poster should be appended to the front door advising patients that the pharmacy is not open and where they can access other local pharmacies. Also, the poster should advise patients that they can talk to a member of staff if it's in relation to their prescription/medication.
6. Signpost, redirect or supply medicines already dispensed.

7. Consider vulnerable or elderly patients, insulin dependent diabetics, epileptic patients etc., who might suffer significant harms if they miss a dose of medication. (See below for notifying prescribers)
8. Once the pharmacy is open again please do not forget to submit your unscheduled closure form to NHSEI via england.lscpharmacy@nhs.net.

Where the unscheduled closure is due to large numbers of staff having to self-isolate thus leading to an extended period of closure, please consider the checklist below:

Patient Safety Considerations

- Owings, part dispensed items and dispensed items awaiting collection or delivery**
 - Can they be completed and safely delivered? If sent out for delivery, ensure that any medicines can be returned to the pharmacy if the patient is not available.
 - For medicines not supplied, create a list for each GP which includes the names and address of each patient and medicines retained by the pharmacy.
 - Check the fridge and Controlled Drugs cabinet for any items
 - Contact the surgeries to advise of the closure and the specific patient issues. Using your NHS.mail account, email that list to the surgery **or** otherwise arrange safe delivery to the surgery if possible, without infection risk

- EPS scripts**
 - Make attempts to return scripts to Spine if possible
 - Notify practices of the list of patients where EPS cannot be returned and advise that the patient may require a duplicate script
 - Be clear that the pharmacy will be closed due to COVID and that the surgery should not send the duplicate script by EPS to your pharmacy. This may require the practice to issue a Green paper copy FP10
 - Switch off EPS automatic downloads for your pharmacy or ask your system provider to switch it off

- Substance misuse prescriptions**
 - Attempt to notify each patient directly if possible
 - Notify the local substance misuse service provider that prepares and supplies the prescriptions
 - Provide each patient's details, the supplies made against the current prescription and the number of outstanding supplies for that script.
 - Please indicate when the patient is due to collect next
 - Advise where the patient should collect from in the meantime, if known

- Closure or Reduced service delivery**
 - Use of PPE and infection control
 - NOTIFY the Commissioner NHSE/I as soon as practicable. Inform your situation and requirements. Local discussions and resolutions.
 - Your email includes a contact number for all further contact as normal Pharmacy line may not be the appropriate route to contact the branch if closed
 - Operational impact and any mitigating actions, including:
 - Compliance with Infection Prevention and Control guidance



- Report to CCG or NHSE/I Regional Incident Coordination Centre:
england.eprnw@nhs.net
- Inform local prescribers / stakeholders and inform them of steps taken to mitigate risk and support patients.
- Process for reinstating full services when safe to do so
- Update Directory of Service (DoS) or notify local DoS lead. Update NHS Website only if closing permanently or for greater than 24-hours
- Ensure patient facing communications are in place and advise on how to access services and/or of a closure e.g. pharmacy website, posters, voicemail.
- Ensure all pharmacy staff contact details are up to date and available to managers
- Have a nominated and a backup contact for staff who are contacted by 'Test and Trace'
- Ensure that all staff know that if contacted by the Test and Trace team they inform the caller that they work in a pharmacy **and** ask for the call to be escalated to someone more senior to discuss next steps

Community pharmacies should have direct access to update their DoS profiles using the DoS Profile Updater. This includes changes to opening hours and temporary closures. The changes are visible within 10 minutes. There is also a [DoS Capacity Status tool](#) where providers can mark themselves red, amber or green in terms of capacity. You can request changes via your local DoS lead if you do not usually update your own profile.

Yours sincerely



Max Harrison
Senior Contract Manager

