

Stakeholder Briefing

Access to pharmacy services for 'Shielded' patients

As arrangements for local volunteer groups, supporting Shielded Patient, are reviewed in coming months, this briefing will help volunteers in discussing ongoing support for medicines delivery with the people they have been helping in recent months.

Patients identified as 'shielding' (in the 'clinically very high risk' category), due to the Covid-19 pandemic, are advised to make arrangements for delivery, or collection, of dispensed items from their usual community pharmacy.

Wherever possible, patients should utilise friends or family members to collect items from the pharmacy. If patients have no one who can collect on their behalf, there are several services available to ensure they can obtain their dispensed items without having to collect them in person. Patients should be encouraged to discuss any concerns they have with the regular pharmacy.

There are various local voluntary groups who are providing a collection and delivery service from pharmacies for Shielded patients, many supported by local authorities. Volunteers are also accessible via the NHS GoodSam app, who can also provide this service. The patient's pharmacy should facilitate identifying volunteer support where required for Shielded patients.

Where use of family/friends or volunteers is not possible for Shielded patients, there is also an NHS funded Community Pharmacy Pandemic Delivery Service, which will be in place until 31st July 2020. Through this service, the pharmacy will arrange for the delivery of dispensed items to the Shielded patient free of charge. The delivery service may be provided by the patient's usual pharmacy or, if this pharmacy does not have the ability to deliver, by an alternative pharmacy locally.

Another option, which some patients may consider, would be accessing a Distance Selling Pharmacy who can deliver to patients free of charge. This service would be available to any patient in England, not just Shielded patients. Distance Selling Pharmacies are required to provide a free delivery service, so this will continue beyond the date on which the NHS funded Community Pharmacy Pandemic Delivery Service ceases on 31st July 2020. Patients would need to give consent for their prescriptions to be sent to an alternative pharmacy. This should be an informed decision by the patient, or their representative if the patient does not have capacity.

Where a patient indicates their intention would be to change pharmacies, care must be taken to ensure no individual pharmacy provider is recommended to a patient which could influence their choice of pharmacy.

For patients who are self-isolating, but not shielding, there is no NHS funded delivery service. Patients can utilise friends, family or volunteers or ask the pharmacy if they are able to deliver. Where delivery is agreed, it is important to note this may incur a charge for non-shielding patients, as this would be a private arrangement.

