

## **Prescription Ordering Direct: Frequently asked questions and answers**

### **Is Prescription Ordering Direct closing?**

Yes. The ICB has decided that POD will discontinue in its current form later in the year. This will include stopping the processing of repeat prescriptions and providing support and advice on medical appliances.

### **When is POD closing?**

While plans for a smooth transition away from POD are currently being worked out, it is intended for POD to close on or before 30 June, however this date may change as plans are formed and formal timeframes agreed. The move away from POD will follow a phased approach, with patients being kept informed of any changes that are introduced. For now, POD remains open as usual.

### **Can I still use POD to order my repeat prescriptions, appliances and advice?**

Those patients who regularly use POD to arrange their repeat medication or get support or advice on appliances, should continue to use POD in the usual way until told otherwise. Many GP practices offer patients the option of ordering their prescriptions through the surgery directly, while some may also choose to use the NHS App.

### **Will there be a way for patients to order prescriptions by telephone after POD has closed?**

The process of arranging patients' repeat prescriptions will be managed by GP practices directly once POD has closed. Each practice will have a different approach to prescriptions, and it will be up to the individual practices to communicate these new arrangements to patients directly. Until practices have provided such information, patients should continue to use POD for their prescription needs or speak to their practice for clarification. From Friday 1 March, telephone lines into POD will open at the later time of 10am and close at the earlier time of 3pm.

### **Why is POD closing?**

Only patients registered at 25 of the 88 GP practices in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire currently have access to POD, with the majority of local residents having to order their repeat prescriptions through their surgery or via the NHS App. This level of imbalance in the local region has become unsustainable, especially as all GP practices receive funding to process their respective patients' repeat prescriptions. In addition, the ICB, which currently provides POD and inherited the system from the former Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group in 2022, is not designed to host patient-facing functions.

### **How was the decision to close POD made?**

At the end of 2023, a dedicated taskforce from the ICB was assigned to engage with local health and care providers, such as GP practices, care homes and pharmacies, about exploring alternative ways in which POD could be delivered to local people. If a new model could not be found, it was agreed that POD in its current form would close. The findings of this engagement exercise were presented to the ICB's Executive Management Team at an extraordinary meeting in January 2024, where a

decision was made, due to no viable alternative solution being found, that POD would close.

### **Were patients and the public involved in the decision-making process?**

The ICB invited correspondence from patients and the public, engaged with practices and care homes and professional organisations and local Healthwatch groups. Furthermore, research on repeat prescribing was looked at and the ICB also commissioned Healthwatch Wiltshire to carry out independent research with local people regarding their thoughts and feelings towards repeat prescribing in the local area. The feedback from this exercise was taken into consideration during the overall decision-making process.

### **When was the decision made?**

The ICB's Executive Management Team made the decision at an extraordinary meeting on Monday 8 January 2024.

### **Why not expand POD to include all GP practices in the region?**

ICBs are organisations whose main purpose is to commission external health and care which meets the needs of local people, while tackling equity and reducing inequality. As such, the organisation was not set up to provide patient-facing functions. Additionally, the ICB does not have access to the finances needed to expand the system any wider than it is now.

NHS England has also set an aim that by March 2024, around 90 per cent of patients should be using the NHS App to arrange their repeat prescriptions. Investing further in POD would go against the strategic direction that has been outlined by NHS England.

### **Where can I get more information about the closure?**

Updates will be shared with patients and communities as and when developments take place. GP practices currently aligned with POD will also share news and updates with their patients. Information relating to POD, including details of the transition, will also be added to the ICB website, [www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk](http://www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk).

### **What should I do if my question is not covered in this list?**

Questions and queries should be submitted to the ICB's Patient Advice and Liaison Service, either by phone (0300 561 0250) or email ([scwcsu.palscomplaints@nhs.net](mailto:scwcsu.palscomplaints@nhs.net)).