

Issue 5: Working together to minimise the impact of medicines shortages

Key issues:

- **Working together with understanding and good communication will help minimise the impact of medicines shortages for patients, pharmacies and GP practices.**
- Medicines supply issues are a growing national problem and affect all sectors of the ICS (Integrated Care System) and lead to frustration and concern to patients.
- Shortages are caused by factors such as manufacturing problems and global market share.
- Pharmacies are spending a lot of time sourcing medicines, sometimes having to contact multiple wholesalers which is not always easy since the stock situation changes rapidly, sometimes within hours.
- GP practices also spend a lot of time having to change prescriptions, often without knowing what alternatives are available.
- ICB Prescribing budgets are under pressure as the price of medicines increase.

Community pharmacy:

- Inform prescribers of potential alternatives that are available. The **HW Drug Formulary** can help to identify first and second line choices.
- Ask the GP practice for an alternative phone number to avoid using patient lines and/ or arrange a set time of day when a prescriber is available for queries.
- Liaise with nearby pharmacies to advise patients where a pharmacy has stock
- Make use of current **Serious Shortage Protocols**.
- Use a patient information leaflet to explain shortages here.
- Limited availability can lead to significantly inflated prices. Report pricing concerns to Community pharmacy England.
- Use in pharmacy messaging the HW ICB [Your prescription 7 day from ordering to collection](#) resource
- Encourage patients to order medicines in good time using the [NHS App - NHS Digital](#)

GP practices:

- Prescribe generically where appropriate- this allows pharmacies to dispense any available brand
- Use 28 day prescribing whenever possible – prescribing for longer periods can exacerbate supply issues. **Do not change the prescription interval**
- Arrange a set time of day when local community pharmacy can bring issues and/ or give them an alternative phone number to avoid using patient lines. Review changes to prescriptions when stocks are available again.
- Use patient information leaflet to explain shortages - [here](#).
- Consider allowing 7 days before a prescription is due to run out to give time for processing and stock location.
- Encourage patients to order their repeat medicines via the [NHS App guidance for GP practices - NHS Digital](#) in good time
- Note that the [NHS Delivery Plan](#) encourages pharmacies to use “hub and spoke” models to help manage their workload which can add to lead times.
- Display prominently and use in practice via different means of messaging to patients the HW ICB [7 day from ordering to collection](#) resource

Healthcare Professional (HCP) Information



[Specialist Pharmacy Service Medicines Supply Tool](#)

List of known, enduring shortages - does not cover all short term problems (anyone with nhs.net email can [register](#))



[HW Drug Formulary](#)

Useful to identify formulary alternatives



[Community Pharmacy England Serious Shortage Protocols](#)

Allows pharmacists to switch certain products without referring patients back to the prescriber.



[NHS Service Finder](#)

For health and care professionals - accurate, real-time information to help signpost patients to available services. Includes non-public contact details.

Patient Information

[Community Pharmacy England Medicines Factsheet - Information on medicines supply for patients](#)

Pharmacies could email the **Pharmacy to GP Communication Form** available on [GP TeamNet](#) as below:



Pharmacy to GP
Practice Form Version

This form can be used where non – urgent requests for changes to a prescription detail can be made to the practice through an agreed email route.

Information on EPS can be found here with care not to direct prescriptions

[NHS Digital - Medicines Supply Issues and the use of EPS](#)

Suggested managing expected & unexpected out of stock situations (OOS)

