

**From the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer  
Mrs Cathy Harrison**



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

## **FOR ACTION**

Chief Executive, Strategic Planning and  
Performance Group (*for onward transmission  
to relevant staff*)

Chief Executive, Business Services Organisation  
(*for onward transmission to relevant staff*)

Assistant Director of Integrated Care, Head of  
Pharmacy and Medicines Management, SPPG  
(*for onward distribution to Community  
Pharmacies*).

Head of General Medical Services, SPPG (*for  
onward distribution to GP Practices*)

GP Medical Advisers, Strategic Planning and  
Performance Group.

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Stormont

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Our Ref HE1/22/272353

Date: 08 June 2022

Dear Colleagues,

## **UPDATED SERIOUS SHORTAGE PROTOCOLS – HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT) MEDICATION**

As you will all be aware, serious shortage protocols (SSPs) under the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMRs) are an additional tool to manage and mitigate medicines shortages. An SSP enables community pharmacists to supply a specified medicine in accordance with a protocol rather than a prescription, without needing to seek authorisation from the prescriber, saving time for patients, pharmacists and prescribers. They are used in the case of a serious shortage, where a medicine would be likely to be out of stock for some time, and if, in the opinion of ministers, it would help manage the supply situation.

You will recall that I previously wrote to you on 24 May 2022 to advise that in light of concerns across the UK regarding the availability and supply of a number of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) medicines, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) made the decision to develop ten Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs) covering five HRT medicines.

I can now confirm that two of these SSPs (SSP022 and SSP023) have been updated. Annex A of these two SSPs has been updated in order to include a dose conversion to a specific alternative Estradiol patch for patients who use 1 pump of Oestrogel daily, in addition to the previous dose conversions for patients using 2 to 4 pumps daily. A

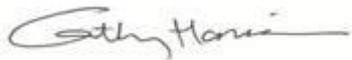
decision has been taken by the Minister for Health to authorise the issue of these two updated SSPs.

Details on these updated SSP's are attached separately as a separate document to this letter and will also be available on the Business Services Organisation (BSO) dedicated page on its website at [www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3063.htm](http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3063.htm)

### **Action Required**

All relevant staff should be made aware of these updated SSPs. I would therefore ask SPPG to bring this information to the attention of GP Practices and Community Pharmacists directly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Harrison', written in a cursive style.

**Cathy Harrison**  
**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**