

To: All Community Pharmacists

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27<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Colleague

## **RECOMMENCEMENT OF COMMUNITY PHARMACY MINOR AILMENTS SERVICE FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic a number of community pharmacy services including the Minor Ailments Service (MAS) were stood down with immediate effect. This was to help relieve pressures on pharmacy staff and ensure that essential services, primarily dispensing services, could continue to be provided in a safe manner.

HSCB, DOH and CPNI have been working to establish which pharmaceutical services may be safely reintroduced. It has been agreed that community pharmacies may recommence the provision of the Minor Ailments Service from **1<sup>st</sup> September 2020**.

### **Reconfiguration of the service**

The ongoing pandemic may, however, affect the ability of some pharmacies to safely deliver this service in its current format. Therefore some flexibility in how pharmacies can deliver this service has been agreed:

- 1. Consultations may be conducted via telephone or video call** – prior to the pandemic, the service specification for the MAS required patients to present in the pharmacy for a consultation with the pharmacist. The service may now be provided using telephone or video call consultations and the pharmacist should use their professional judgement to determine the most suitable arrangements for individual patients. It is recommended that the patient consultation record is annotated to record when a consultation has been undertaken via telephone or video call.

Please note that consultations carried out by video call should only take place via the Pharmacy's HSC Zoom account as this enables the most appropriate security settings to be applied to all HSC users of Zoom. Details of how to apply for a HSC Zoom account can be found at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3154.htm>

2. **Third party consultations** - Previously third party consultations were generally limited to a parent/guardian presenting with a set of symptoms for a child. It is recognised that a patient who requires advice and treatment for a minor ailment, may be adhering the Public Health Agency's COVID-19 guidance to self-isolate, therefore in some situations it may be a representative of the patient who is requesting a MAS consultation. In this situation pharmacists are asked to use their professional judgement and to consider the best interests of the patient. Where practical the pharmacist may still wish to speak directly to the patient / patient's carer via telephone or video call.
  
3. **Appointments for consultation** – until now the MAS has been available as a walk in service on demand. Workload and social distancing requirements caused by the pandemic, may present a challenge to some pharmacies in the ability to deliver the service in this way; in some circumstances pharmacies may find it helpful to offer an appointment time to a patient or their representative for a MAS consultation, particularly when they are to be conducted via telephone or video call.

### **Service remuneration**

Consultation fees for the Minor Ailments Service will be paid under the same tiered structure as previously<sup>1</sup>. The payment due within the structure will be based on the number of cumulative consultation fees from 1 April 2020.

### **Pharmacy First**

Whilst the strategic direction is for a full Pharmacy First service, based on a patient registration model, an interim Pharmacy First service will be available later in the autumn. Further information on the Pharmacy First service for this autumn / winter will be provided in due course.

### **Action for Community Pharmacies**

- In advance of recommencing the service, pharmacies may find the checklist in Appendix 1 useful to ensure that they are able to deliver this service safely, minimising the risk to both patients and pharmacy teams of contracting COVID-19.
  
- Ensure that an updated Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is in place to support delivery of the service.
  
- Ensure that all pharmacy staff involved in the delivery of the service are fully competent and knowledgeable in all processes and procedures relating to this service.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2034.htm>

- Ensure that the appropriate PV1s are used in the delivery of this service. Please reserve NCR duplicate copy PV1s for the delivery of the Emergency Supply Service only.
- Please inform your local HSCB Integrated Care Office by 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020 if your pharmacy will **not** be in a position to recommence offering this service.

If you have any query about this service, please contact your local HSCB Pharmacy Adviser.

Yours sincerely,



**Joe Brogan**  
**Assistant Director of Integrated Care**  
**Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management**

<b>Contact Details for Local Integrated Care Offices:</b>				
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**Checklist for restarting Minor Ailments Service**

<b>Criteria for restarting MAS</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>INFECTION PREVENTION</b></p> <p>Every effort should be taken to avoid exposure to infection for both patients and pharmacy teams. This should include measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent hand washing – before and after MAS consultation</li> <li>• Hand sanitisation point for patients</li> <li>• Use of appropriate PPE</li> <li>• Signage in pharmacy to alert patients who are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 not to enter the pharmacy</li> </ul>		
<p><b>PATIENT CONSULTATION</b></p> <p>Ideally MAS consultations should be undertaken in a private area of the pharmacy such as consultation room:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a suitable private area for consultations available?</li> <li>• Can requirements for social distancing be maintained?</li> <li>• Is there a system in place to book appointments MAS consultations?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>TELEPHONE / VIDEO CONSULTATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is zoom technology available for video call consultations?</li> <li>• Is there a system in place to book appointments for telephone / video consultations?</li> </ul>		