



Community Pharmacy Bulletin

Date: 23 December 2025

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Headline News

Thank You to Our Pharmacy Contractors – With Warm Wishes for the Festive Season

Dear Colleagues,

As 2025 draws to a close, we would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of our pharmacy contractors for what has been an exceptionally busy and challenging year.

This year has seen unprecedented pharmacy closures, higher flu activity than in recent years, significant regulatory changes, and increasing demands placed on community pharmacy. Despite these pressures, you have continued to deliver a consistently high standard of care for patients—dispensing medicines, providing trusted clinical advice, delivering Pharmacy First consultations, and supporting communities day in and day out.

Through it all, you have remained committed, professional, and patient-focused, often working behind the scenes to ensure people receive the care and support they need. Your resilience and dedication have not gone unnoticed, and we truly appreciate everything you do.

As we approach the festive season, we would like to wish you and your teams warm seasonal wishes and a happy, healthy New Year.

Not all superheroes wear capes. Pharmacists are everyday heroes—quietly preventing harm, managing complex medicines, counselling patients, and solving problems that many never see. Your work is vital, valued, and deserving of recognition.

Thank you once again for everything you do.

Mandatory Pharmacy Health Campaigns: Only Order What You Need (01-19 December 2025)

Thank you to all those who have already completed the local health campaign and submitted their declaration via the MS online form.

Due to the Christmas period approaching and added pressures in the lead up to the holiday season the deadline to submit the declaration of participation in the Local Health Campaign 'Only Order What You Need' has been extended to **23:59 on Friday 9 January 2026**.

You are required to complete and submit the declaration form using the following link ([Declaration of Participation Only Order What You Need Health Campaign 1-19 December 2025 – Fill in form](#)). For those contractors with multiple premises, Head Office teams have been instructed to use the option of completing an Excel spreadsheet for ease of submitting multiple declarations.

Please note this is a **mandatory** campaign and failure to participate may result in sanctions in relation to a breach of the terms of service under NHS Pharmaceutical Regulations 2013, Schedule 4, Part 2, Para .18 of the Terms of Service of NHS Pharmacists.

If you have any queries with the above, then please do not hesitate to contact the pharmacy team at england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net.

Reminders to Pharmacies ahead of the Bank Holiday

Ahead of the BH we always encourage the Pharmacies to be proactive and remind them with the list below:

Reminding patients to collect their Prescriptions early where they can.

- To contact patients in the days leading up to the Bank holidays to collect prescriptions, that may be waiting in the pharmacy.
- Ensure you have made arrangements for your “daily pick up” patients.
- Encourage neighbouring GP surgeries to send electronic prescriptions over promptly.
- Work with neighbouring Pharmacies and GP Surgeries “buddying” arrangements in unexpected weather events.
- Display opening hours on the door and for the nearest Pharmacy that is open on the BH.
- Update DOS and NHS.UK with opening hours over the Christmas period so patients have the correct information.
- Keep the emergency cascade contact list updated for all staff for emergencies and make sure business continuity plan is current.
- Ensure that NHS email accounts are checked regularly for any updates or alerts and ensure that staff can access these accounts when locum pharmacists are covering.
- Pharmacy First - where pharmacies are signed up, ensure that staff have access to the system to receive referrals when locum pharmacists are covering. All referrals are closed on the system to ensure payment.
- Ensure that any temporary suspensions are notified to NHS South West Collaborative Commissioning Hub as soon as possible and DOS and OOH is informed to allow changes to the system

Adverse Weather Conditions

We are now entering the winter season where the country may be subjected to some extremely adverse cold weather with snow and heavy rain. If you find that you are unable to open due to adverse weather, then please ensure you report any temporary suspension of service as soon as practicable via one of the following ways: -

- via [Manage Your Service \(MYS\) portal](#).
- Completing the Temporary Suspension Form found [here](#) titled Annex 18 and sending this to england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net.
- Completing the SW Online Microsoft Form found [here](#)

As part of implementing your business continuity plan for the closure the following actions should be completed:

1. Update their directory of services (DoS) profiles via Profile Manager to show the temporary suspension of service.
2. Ensure patients are not referred to the pharmacy premises for directed urgent care services during the temporary suspension where practicable.
3. Notify other pharmaceutical service providers and GP practices about the suspension, and its anticipated duration, where practicable.
4. Display the necessary information to patients about the suspension, and its anticipated duration, in the approved manner, so that it is visible from outside the pharmacy (or for DSPs made the necessary changes to their website).
5. Ensure arrangements are in place for the continuity of patient care, including those patients with booked appointments or those attending the pharmacy regularly for the supervised administration of medicines. (Details on how to find your local Drug and Alcohol Support Service can be found under the Drug & Alcohol Services section of this bulletin).
6. Use all reasonable endeavours to resume the provision of pharmaceutical services as soon as practicable.

Pharmacy Nominations Can Only Be Changed with Patient Consent

We would like to remind all staff that a patient's nominated pharmacy **must not be changed without their explicit consent.**

Patients have the right to choose which pharmacy their prescriptions are sent to. This nomination can only be updated:

- By the patient themselves, using the NHS App or by speaking directly with their chosen pharmacy; or
- With the patient's clear and informed consent, if assisting them in the practice or pharmacy.

Important:

- A nomination cannot be changed at the request of a third party (e.g., family member, care provider, another pharmacy) unless the patient has provided appropriate consent or has a legally authorised representative.
- Changing nominations without consent may lead to complaints, delayed access to medicines, and potential data protection concerns.

Please ensure all staff remain vigilant and follow the correct processes to support patient choice

More information can be found [Respecting Patient Choice for Pharmacy EPS Nominations - Community Pharmacy England](#)

Standards for revalidation reflective account set for 2026

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) have announced that from 1 January 2026, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians can select any of the nine Standards for pharmacy professionals for their revalidation reflective account. The same requirements regarding reflection against one of more of the standards are required.

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are currently required to select one or more of three standards chosen by the GPhC and give one or more examples of how they have met the standard(s) in their practice.

Expanding the standards which can be used for reflection will enable pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to focus on the specific aspects of their practice they consider to be most relevant. This change is part of a continuing review of the current revalidation framework.

Find out more at [www.pharmacyregulation.org/pharmacists/revalidation-renewal](#)

Dispensing Services Quality Scheme (DSQS)

Thank you, those dispensing practices who have returned their Self-Declaration Assessment.

A gentle reminder that the recommended deadline for the return of your Self-Declaration Assessment is **Friday 23 January 2026.**

Once completed please return on email to england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net.

Whilst we recommend you complete the return on the date specified above this is only voluntary and you do still have up until the end of the year; **31 March 2026** to submit all evidence for DSQS

Easter planning 2026

We are seeking expressions of interest from pharmacies who would be willing to support on any of the Bank Holidays over Easter, **03/05/06 April 2026**, to help extend the provision of pharmaceutical services to support Out of Hours.

If you can support, please complete the [Expressions of Interest Form](#) noting your intentions for all of the Easter Bank Holidays by **Wednesday 31 December 2025** please include the hours between which you could open on each date in the relevant section. Any help would be appreciated, especially on Easter Sunday, and there is payment associated with this which is as follows: -

- Easter Sunday 5 April 2026 **£391.45 per hour**
- All other Bank Holidays **£307.57 per hour**

Thank you to those contractors who have already completed an EoI for one or more of the Bank Holidays, we will be reviewing these in early 2026 and contacting those where support would be needed

LFPSE Webinar – hold the date

Our second webinar on LFPSE (run by our colleagues in the Quality Team at NHS England) is taking place on **Thursday 29th January 2026 at 6pm**.

As LFPSE is now part of the pharmacy regulations ([NHS England » Incident reporting system](#)) this is a great opportunity to learn how and when to use it.

This webinar is open to all pharmacy staff and there is no need to register for this event, please just join via the following link: [Join the meeting now](#). If you haven't used Microsoft Teams before it may be worth downloading the app in advance.

If we are unable to answer any questions during the webinar, we will follow up after the event. If you do experience any problems joining the webinar, please email england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net

We look forward to seeing you on 29th January 2026. We have attached the slides from the previous webinar for those unable to join.

Patient Returned Medications

We understand it may be a challenging time of year to contain pharmaceutical waste. Please may we remind you that it is a mandatory requirement to accept patient returned medications; patients should not be turned away.

If you feel you are struggling to contain any further pharmaceutical waste, please contact us at england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net and we can support to remove such waste."

Campaign Information

Dry January

Dry January is a public health campaign that encourages people to take a break from alcohol for the month of January. It's voluntary, flexible, and focused on improving wellbeing rather than "giving something up".

Key benefits of taking part

1. Physical health benefits

- Improved liver function and reduced liver fat
- Better sleep quality and more consistent energy levels
- Lower blood pressure and cholesterol in some people
- Weight management, as alcohol is high in calories
- Improved skin hydration and appearance

2. Mental wellbeing

- Reduced anxiety and low mood
- Better concentration and memory
- Improved emotional regulation
- Greater sense of control over drinking habits

3. Long-term drinking habits

- Helps people reflect on their relationship with alcohol
- Many people drink less afterwards, even if they resume drinking
- Builds confidence to say no to alcohol in social situations

4. Financial benefits

- Reduced spending on alcohol
- Increased awareness of how much alcohol costs over time

5. Wider health awareness

- Raises awareness of UK drinking guidelines
- Encourages healthier coping strategies for stress and socialising

Why people choose to do Dry January

- To “reset” after Christmas
- To improve health or sleep
- To support weight or fitness goals
- To reassess personal drinking habits
- To support friends or family
- To start the year with a positive lifestyle change

This is not a mandatory public health campaign.

World Religion Day – 19 January 2026

World Religion Day is observed every year on the third Sunday of January, which in 2026 falls on **19 January**. The day aims to promote understanding, respect, and peace between people of all faiths by encouraging learning, dialogue, and reflection.

The observance was first introduced in 1950 by members of the Bahá’í Faith, whose teachings emphasise the unity of all religions. They believe that while faith traditions may differ in practice or name, they share common values, and that every person—regardless of religion—has equal worth and equal rights.

World Religion Day encourages us to recognise the shared principles found across spiritual and moral traditions, and to focus on what unites rather than divides. Throughout history, misunderstandings and conflicts between religions have often overshadowed these shared values. This day serves as a reminder to work towards peaceful coexistence, deeper understanding, and greater appreciation of the diversity within our communities.

It is an opportunity to:

- Learn about the beliefs and practices of different religions
- Promote dialogue and understanding
- Celebrate the contributions people of all faiths make to society
- Support harmony and respect within diverse communities

World Religion Day invites everyone—of any faith or none—to reflect on the importance of compassion, unity, and mutual respect in building a more peaceful world.

This is not a mandatory campaign

Make the New Year Your Time to Quit Smoking

The New Year (2025/2026) is an ideal moment to make a fresh start and set a goal to quit smoking. Stopping smoking brings rapid health benefits and can also lead to significant financial savings. You don't have to do it alone—effective support is available, and you're far more likely to succeed with help than by relying on willpower alone.

Set a Quit Date

Choose a specific day—such as New Year's Day—and commit to it. Having a clear target helps you prepare and stay focused.

Seek Support

Let friends, family, and colleagues know you're quitting so they can encourage you. You are up to *four times more likely* to quit successfully with the right support.

Change Your Routine

Identify the situations that prompt you to smoke—such as having a morning coffee—and try to change those habits. Small adjustments, like switching drinks or taking a short walk, can help break old patterns.

Use Stop Smoking Aids

Nicotine patches, gum, lozenges, inhalators, or prescription medication can help manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Using these greatly increases your chance of success.

Stay Active

Exercise, even in short bursts, can help reduce cravings, boost your mood, and keep you focused on your goal.

The Benefits Start Straight Away

Within 20 minutes: Your pulse rate returns to normal.

Within 48 hours: Your senses of taste and smell begin to improve.

After a few weeks: Breathing improves, coughing and wheezing reduce, and everyday activities become easier.

Long-term: Your risks of heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer reduce dramatically.

Quitting smoking also has proven benefits for your mental wellbeing, helping reduce stress, anxiety, and low mood once the initial withdrawal period has passed.

Financial Benefits

Stopping smoking can save the average person £2,500–£3,000 per year, depending on how much they smoke. That's money back in your pocket for holidays, hobbies, or other personal goals.

Resources can be downloaded here [New Year 2025/26 Quit Smoking | Campaigns | Campaign Resource Centre](#)

This is not a mandatory campaign

Useful Information

GDPR email requirements

We would like to remind all contractors that any email containing patient identifiable information must be sent from a secure email address, preferably the pharmacies shared generic nhs.net store email address. Any emails with patient details must not be sent from a non-secure email address as this could result in a breach of GDPR.

Email Correspondence – Signature Details

Please ensure that when communicating with the NHS South West Collaborative Commissioning Hub's Community Pharmacy Team you include the following details within your correspondence to help us respond to your enquiry. Many thanks.

- Contact Name
- Name of Contractor
- ODS Code (F Code)

Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs)

All current Serious Shortage Protocols can be viewed via [BSA website](#).

If you have any questions regarding SSPs please contact the NHS Prescription Service:

- Email: nhsbsa.prescriptionservices@nhsbsa.nhs.uk
- Telephone: 0300 330 1349
- Textphone: 18001 0300 330 1349

DHSC Medicine Supply Notifications

DHSC and NHSE/I have now launched an online [Medicines Supply Tool](#), which provides up to date information about medicine supply issues. The contents of these MSNs can now be viewed on the Tool. The Tool also details any changes to resupply dates and updates to the entries. To access the Tool, you will be required to register with the [SPS website](#).

The Medicine Supply Tool is moving on the SPS website. Update your links and bookmark its new home in the 'Tools' section: <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/home/tools/medicines-supply-tool/>

Medicine Alerts

For information on medical alerts, recalls and safety information regarding drugs and medical devices please see the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency below:

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Reporting a Temporary Suspension of Service

In accordance with regulations, contractors must notify the commissioner of any temporary suspension in service; including those for reasons due to illness or causes beyond the control of the contractor. In accordance with

pharmacy regulations contractors must provide evidence to the commissioner that they have undertaken the following:

- Notified the commissioner of the suspension as soon as practical.
- Used all reasonable endeavors to implement the business continuity plan required by paragraph 29D, Schedule 4 of the NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013, and
- Used all reasonable endeavors to resume the provision of pharmaceutical services as soon as is practicable. (Paragraph 23(10), Schedule 4, of the NHS (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013.

In the event of you being unable to open please complete a Temporary Suspension closure form via one of the following ways either:

1. via [Manage Your Service \(MYS\) portal](#).
2. Completing the Temporary Suspension Form found [here](#) titled Annex 18 and sending this to the SW generic email address: england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net.

Details of the new Temporary Suspension policy can be found [here](#) the new temporary suspension policy went live on the **01 of April 2025**.

Changes of director and/or superintendent pharmacist

When a body corporate appoints a new director and / or a new superintendent they must inform the commissioner within 30 days of the person taking up that new position. Recent experience suggests that contractors sometimes overlook making these declarations.

To make such a declaration you should go to the Primary Care Support England (PCSE) website at <https://pcse.england.nhs.uk/services/pharmacy-market-administration-services/market-entry/> where you will be able to complete the necessary declarations. Failure to notify any changes to directors and / or superintendent pharmacist maybe a breach of your terms of service.

NHSBSA Hints and Tips

Please see below the links to the NHSBSA website and a link for previous back copies

- [GP and Pharmacy support: open days, webinars and newsletters | NHSBSA](#)
- <https://r1.dotdigital-pages.com/p/7R9K-79Q/sign-up-for-the-hints-tips-bulletin>

Pharmacy Support for Health & Wellbeing

Please see below support available for our NHS people with free confidential coaching and support for the primary care workforce.

- Wellbeing apps:
 - NHS staff have been given free access to a number of wellbeing apps to support their mental health and wellbeing.
 - Link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/wellbeing-apps/>
- Mental Health and Wellbeing:
 - Guidance and advice on how you can stay mentally healthy and boost your wellbeing from Pharmacists' Support.
 - Link: <https://pharmacistsupport.org/i-need-help-managing-my/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

Interpretation & Translation Services

Interpretation and translation services are available for Community Pharmacies when treating NHS Patients. These services are commissioned and paid for by NHS England.

The information and how to access these are available on the South West Pharmacy website page via the following link [NHS England — South West » Interpretation and Translation Services](#).

The services commissioned cover the following areas:

- Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG)
- Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon, and Wiltshire (BSW)
- Cornwall & Isles of Scilly
- Devon
- Dorset
- Gloucestershire
- Somerset

Contact Details and Further Information

South West Collaborative Commissioning Hub - Community Pharmacy Contract Management Team contact information: email: england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net.

Website: [South West Community Pharmacy information](#) for more further information, blank templates, forms, and documents.

Please report any controlled drug incidents to us via our reporting website www.cdreporting.co.uk
The NHSE SW Controlled Drugs Team can be contacted at ENGLAND.southwestcontrolleddrugs@nhs.net

Riddle of the Month

The answer to last month's riddle was Ebenezer. This month's riddle is
I speak without a mouth and hear without ears. I have no body, but I come alive with wind. What am I?



Send your answers to the pharmacy team at england.pharmacysouthwest@nhs.net. We will share the answer in the next bulletin