



## Safe use of consultation rooms: guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic

As restrictions relating to COVID-19 are relaxed, many community pharmacies will be considering how services, which may have been paused at the height of the pandemic, can be reintroduced, and how this can be done safely.

This document has been written by the Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group (CPPSG), a cross sector group made up of the 17 largest community pharmacy businesses as well as the NPA and Numark. It aims to support pharmacy teams considering how they can minimise risk when using consultations rooms, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes feedback from pharmacy teams and takes into account the processes introduced by other healthcare providers. It should be considered alongside other risk assessments that have been undertaken.

### Principle

Every consultation room is different. They will be of varying sizes and layouts, have different locations within the pharmacy and have different levels of ventilation. This will result in different levels of risk. The decision to provide a service within the consultation room should be based on the professional judgement of the pharmacist, following an assessment of the risk.

### Preparing to use the consultation room

Considerations	Further details and resources
Consider undertaking a risk assessment of the consultation room.	
Consider which services are being reintroduced.	
Consider cleaning requirements of the consultation room.	As part of this consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Touchpoints cleaning (e.g. door handles, light switches etc.).</li> <li>- Removing unnecessary items from the room.</li> <li>- Removing items that are not easy to clean (e.g. fabric chairs).</li> <li>- Spacing appointments to allow time for the room to be cleaned and aired between patients.</li> <li>- Having suitable means to dispose of used PPE.</li> </ul>
Consider the set-up of the room to reduce the impact of close contact with patients.	This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changing the layout of chairs to maximise distance between colleagues and patients.</li> <li>- Introducing floor markers.</li> <li>- Using Perspex screens.</li> </ul>
Consider ventilation of the room.	This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- air conditioning</li> <li>- opening a window</li> <li>- leaving the door open</li> </ul>



## Pre-consultation

Considerations	Further details and resources
Consider what information should be provided to patients, when it should be provided and in what format it should be presented (e.g. verbally in advance or through posters on entrance to consultation room).	This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requesting that patients do not arrive early and warning that they may be required to wait outside if they do arrive early.</li> <li>- Requesting that patients attend appointments alone, (where appropriate and possible).</li> <li>- Guidance about <a href="#">face coverings</a>.</li> <li>- Information about the following (PHE resources for the public are <a href="#">available here</a>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o symptoms</li> <li>o social distancing</li> <li>o good hand hygiene</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Consider screening patients before providing a service/ entering the consultation room.  Pharmacy teams should also be prepared for patients and customers to ask the same/similar questions of staff members.	Questions may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you, or anyone you live with, have <a href="#">symptoms of COVID-19</a>.</li> <li>- Has someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 been in close contact with you?</li> <li>- Have you been told to self-isolate?</li> </ul>
Consider how to modify services to reduce patient/colleague contact time in the consultation room.  Consider if aspects of the service could be carried out confidentially at a social distance, in line with government guidance, in another part of the pharmacy or remotely (i.e. by phone or by email).	This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- information gathering</li> <li>- service documentation</li> <li>- counselling elements</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">The College of Podiatry</a> have developed a pre-screening and triaging system which you could consider as a way of ensuring you are only seeing patients face-to-face in the consultation room where there is no other method of meeting patients' needs</p>
Inform patient of restrictions/changes to consultation as a result of COVID-19 and confirm they are happy to proceed before entering the consultation room.	

## Providing a service

Considerations	Further details and resources
Consider requirements for patient to wear a face covering. Consider supplying one if patient does not have their own.	See <a href="#">government guidance</a> on face coverings.
Pharmacy colleagues should wash hands/use hand sanitiser in line with national guidance.	See PHE <a href="#">best practice guidance</a> on hand washing and hand rub.
Pharmacy colleagues should wear PPE in line with national guidance.	<a href="#">See PHE guidance</a> on recommended PPE for pharmacy staff.



Pharmacy colleagues should put on any necessary PPE in line with national guidance.	<a href="#">See PHE guidance</a> on putting on PPE.
Provide hand sanitiser/hand washing facilities for patients.	
Where possible, maintain social distance in line with government guidance.	
Consider how requirements in relation to chaperones/parents/carers can be met.  If appropriate pharmacy colleagues may wish to leave the consultation room door open to allow social distancing to be maintained. Consideration should be given to balancing confidentiality and providing a chaperone where space is an issue.	The ICO have <a href="#">published advice for health and social care organisations</a> for maintaining confidentiality in situations where we may depart from our usual procedures during COVID-19.
Consider how distance can be maintained when patient has young children in their care.  If appropriate pharmacy colleagues may wish to leave the consultation room door open to allow social distancing to be maintained. Consideration should be given to balancing confidentiality and providing a chaperone where space is an issue.	
Be prepared if a patient becomes ill during the consultation. Consider updating 'Medical Emergency' SOP in line with guidance during pandemic.	

### Post consultation

Considerations	Further details and resources
Remove and dispose of PPE in line with national guidance.	<a href="#">See PHE guidance</a> on removing PPE.
Pharmacy colleagues should wash hands/use hand sanitiser in line with national guidance.	See PHE <a href="#">best practice guidance</a> on hand washing and hand rub.
Clean consultation room in line with government guidance.	See <a href="#">guidance on decontamination of reusable equipment</a> .
Provide hand sanitiser/hand washing facilities for patients.	See PHE <a href="#">best practice guidance</a> on hand washing and hand rub.