



Medication delivery and prescription collection: guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic

This paper has been developed with input from the Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group, a cross-sector group comprising the 17 largest community pharmacy multiples, as well as the National Pharmacy Association and Numark. It is based upon the group's recent insights from the COVID-19 pandemic and aims to support community pharmacy teams to deliver dispensed items safely during the current and future pandemic situations. It does not supersede individual company guidance.

As well as outlining the general principles for medication delivery and prescription collection, this paper identifies potential risks from the delivery of medication and the collection of prescriptions and the mitigations that community pharmacy teams should consider when adapting their procedures.

The guidance provided is intended to support employed pharmacy staff. It is recognised that some organisations may also engage volunteers to support medication delivery and prescription collection in a pandemic situation. Whilst many of the principles in the paper also apply to volunteers, pharmacy teams should refer to national guidance when working with volunteers. The Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group encourages pharmacy teams to consider the potential risks from volunteers acting as patient representatives and these are summarised in the attached appendix.

General Principles

The following principles should be taken into account when considering medication delivery and prescription collection services:

- The latest social distancing guidelines should be adhered to
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be used, [in line with national guidelines](#)
- Robust hand hygiene, [in line with national guidelines](#), should be maintained at all times
- Pharmacy teams should consider whether services are 'touch free' and how this impacts their delivery e.g. signing for deliveries and prescriptions

Medication delivery

Arranging deliveries

When arranging a delivery, authorised pharmacy team members should ensure that patients are suitably informed about what to expect when a delivery is attempted, especially regarding:

- the expected time of delivery
- the need for the appropriate identity checks to be made
- details of any changes to the usual delivery process, including:
 - agreeing a collection point
 - explaining the implications of social distancing guidelines e.g. changes to the requirement for a signature and the location where the package(s) will be left
- If the delivery driver needs to enter the patient's home for any reason (e.g. to assist with heavy items or because the patient is housebound), the pharmacy colleague should:
 - ask that all members of the household observe social distancing guidelines at all times
 - ask if any member of the household has symptoms of COVID-19 (or is self-isolating due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19**)

** Symptoms of COVID-19 include a high temperature, a new or continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste.



Delivering items to a patient's home

When delivering items to a patient's home, pharmacy teams need to provide guidance for delivery drivers. This may include asking drivers to:

- knock on the patient's door and then step back to ensure social distancing is maintained
- allow enough time for a patient with reduced mobility to get to the door; if there is no answer, treat this in line with internal 'missed delivery' procedures
- confirm the name, address, and postcode of the patient against the bag label(s)
- ask the patient/representative to confirm where the item(s) should be placed
- tell the patient/representative to remain indoors until the package(s) has been placed in the agreed location
- observe the patient/representative collecting the package(s)
- confirm with the patient/representative that the details on the bag label(s) are correct
- inform the patient/representative that he/she should contact the pharmacy if he/she has any questions
- apply antiviral hand foam or gel after making the delivery
- clean equipment (e.g. vehicle door handles, steering wheel, hand brake) on a regular basis
- wash hands thoroughly, with soap and water, upon returning to premises with these facilities

Entering a patient's home

On some occasions delivery drivers may be required to enter a patient's home, for example, if the item(s) is heavy or bulky, or to support a housebound patient who relies on key code access to his or her home. In such circumstances, arrangements may already be in place to allow the driver to gain entry to the property.

Entering a patient's home: delivering heavy or bulky items

- In all circumstances:
 - Apply antiviral hand foam or gel before putting on appropriate PPE
 - Maintain the required social distance from all members of the household at all times
 - Agree a delivery location that is as close as possible to the exit of the premises
 - Decline any requests which involve contact (e.g. handshakes, opening bottles)
 - Apply antiviral hand foam or gel after removing PPE
 - Clean frequently touched surfaces within the delivery vehicle on a regular basis
 - Wash hands thoroughly, with soap and water, upon returning to premises with these facilities

Entering a patient's home: supporting housebound patients who rely on key code access

- In addition to the guidance above:
 - Access the key to the premises in accordance with individual company procedures
 - On entering the premises, greet the patient and make the necessary identity checks
 - Agree a safe place within the property where the dispensed item(s) will be placed
 - Place the dispensed item(s) in the chosen safe location
 - Verbally confirm its delivery to the patient
 - Exit the property and replace the key
 - Follow the hygiene guidance stated above



Delivering items to care homes

When delivering items to care homes, pharmacy teams should provide additional guidance for delivery drivers. Particular care should be taken when care homes are isolating because of suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Those without COVID-19 cases/homes that are not isolating

- In addition to the guidance above
 - Collect empty containers, as appropriate, and where possible
 - Ask the staff member to contact the pharmacy if he or she has any questions

Delivering to care homes: care home with COVID-19 cases/that are isolating

- In addition to the guidance above
 - It is especially important to tell the member of staff to remain indoors until the package(s) has been placed in the agreed location
 - Observe the staff member collecting the package(s) and ask him/her to confirm that the details on the bag label(s) are correct
 - **Do not accept anything (e.g. medication returns or prescriptions) from isolating care homes as part of the delivery**

Prescription collection

Arranging a prescription collection

When arranging a prescription collection, authorised pharmacy team members should ascertain whether patients, care home staff or other relevant healthcare professionals have any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 and/or are isolating. If a care home is isolating or does have COVID-19 cases, follow individual company guidance. In any event, ask the care home staff/GP surgery team member to place the prescriptions for collection in an envelope before the driver's arrival.

Collecting prescriptions

When collecting prescriptions, pharmacy teams should provide guidance for delivery drivers.

Collecting prescriptions from care homes

- Knock on the door and step back to ensure that appropriate social distancing is maintained
- Make the necessary confirmations (whilst still maintaining social distancing from staff)
- Observe the care home staff member exit the care home and place the envelope containing the prescriptions in the chosen safe location and return towards the door
- Collect the envelope containing the prescriptions and verbally confirm its collection to the staff member
- Apply antiviral hand foam or gel
- Clean frequently touched surfaces within the delivery vehicle on a regular basis
- Wash hands thoroughly, with soap and water, upon returning to premises with these facilities



Collecting prescriptions from GP surgeries

- Enter the GP surgery and walk to the prescription collection point
- Maintain appropriate social distancing from all patients, members of the public and staff
- Undertake the necessary confirmations and accept the prescriptions
- Apply antiviral hand foam or gel
- Clean frequently touched surfaces within the delivery vehicle on a regular basis
- Wash hands thoroughly, with soap and water, upon returning to premises with these facilities

Appendix – Volunteers acting as patient representatives – risks for consideration

The following risks should be considered if volunteers act as patient representatives when collecting dispensed items:

- **Delivery errors:** There is potential for medication to be delivered to the wrong address, which may result in the resident taking medication not intended for him/her and the actual patient going without medication. Consequences for both parties could be harmful, depending on the type of medication and the patients' pre-existing medical conditions.
- **Medication transfer:** There is a risk that medication may be transferred to the incorrect person; this could include children, vulnerable adults and pets. There are additional risks if:
 - medication is left on a porch or doorstep (there is also a risk of opportunistic theft)
 - medication is left with a neighbour (without the patient's prior consent)
 - a volunteer is collecting medications for multiple patients
 - medication is delivered to sheltered accommodation or assisted living units, especially where vulnerable patients may not all receive their medication from the same pharmacy
- **Storage concerns:** There is potential for medication to be stored incorrectly, particularly for cold items, if there are delays in delivery or if medications are left with a neighbour.
- **Risks with Controlled Drugs (CDs):** When volunteers collect CDs, the risks are increased in terms of drug abuse, danger to the representative collecting and the impact of 'mix-ups'.
- **Management of medicines:** There are higher risks from medicines requiring intervention/ additional steps in dispensing before transfer to the patient (e.g. insulin - visual check).
- **Patient counselling:** Pharmacy teams should consider what (and how) information is shared with a volunteer and whether it could be lost (or confused on transfer to the patient).
- **Verification of the volunteer:** Pharmacy teams should consider how their volunteers have been verified, given the potential for opportunistic fraud or theft.
- **GDPR breaches:** There is a potential for GDPR breach in relation to incorrect deliveries, unauthorised opening of medication bags and transfer of messages for the patient.
- **Substance misuse patients who are isolating:** Pharmacy teams should have particular regard for the safety of the volunteer who will be delivering; consider whether the individual is able to assess the patient appropriately so as to safeguard himself/herself and the patient.
- **Requests for medication:** Pharmacy teams should devise appropriate procedures for circumstances when a volunteer requests medication on behalf of a patient.