

## Medicine Shortages – Local tips

BSW ICB and Community Pharmacy England recognise that these are unprecedented times with stock shortages, and the increased workload that it has for our GP practices and community pharmacy teams.

CPE produced guidance for Community Pharmacies to follow to enable them to **reduce the need for returning the patient to the GP** to provide a new prescription, see [processes](#). There are some practical steps that pharmacy contractors and their teams can take to help manage the situation:

1. Try contacting a range of different wholesalers and suppliers to locate stock at or lower than Drug Tariff price.
2. Report issues where the product can only be obtained at a price higher than the Drug Tariff listed price using CPE's [online form](#);
3. Check for any known supply issues in the [Medicines Supply Tool](#) hosted on the [Specialist Pharmacy Service \(SPS\) website](#) (any new shortages can be reported here). Access to the Medicines Supply Tool requires registration with an NHS email address.
4. Check for any current [Serious Shortage Protocols \(SSPs\)](#) that may allow alternatives to be given without needing to go back to the prescriber;
5. Provide affected patients with a copy of this [medicines supply factsheet](#)

BSW ICB have suggested some local recommendations that support positive collaboration between GP practice and the community pharmacy when finding solutions for these patients.

**Community Pharmacies** – please cascade this information to your colleagues -

- If you have OOS items - consider whether part dispensing is appropriate or whether the whole prescription should be directed to another pharmacy (particularly relevant if your wholesaler use is restricted)
- As the pharmacist, clinically consider how urgent the supply is, can the patient wait a few days for the expected stock to come in?
- Please **do not ask for a replacement prescription** for an item that is available but more expensive. There are situations where dispensing at a loss can occur in times of shortages of a medicine. Issues should be reported through Community Pharmacy England [Price Concessions - Community Pharmacy England \(cpe.org.uk\)](#). The DHSC will only grant the concession where there is a recognised shortage. Where shortages are reported by contractors, CPE's Dispensing and Supply Team respond quickly and strongly to collect evidence of the problem and put forward arguments to the DHSC that the concession should be granted. [report shortages here](#)

[Bswicb.prescribing@nhs.net](mailto:Bswicb.prescribing@nhs.net)

POD and/or practices are happy to help with OOS / urgent prescription queries once the CPEs recommended steps have been followed. To make sure this is an efficient process it helps to: -

- Let POD or practices know what is available that is most clinically equivalent
- Try to stick to Formulary/cost effective options where possible
- Let POD or practices know how best to communicate with you – phone or email, although phone is often better to have good communication around any issues. Some practices have a **WhatsApp group** between themselves and their local community pharmacies to discuss which pharmacy is able to source medications which is a quicker and easier way of communicating.

[Third of pharmacists unable to supply medicines to patients because of shortages - Community Pharmacy England \(cpe.org.uk\)](https://www.cpe.org.uk)