

Impact of Use of EPS4 on Community Pharmacies

Community pharmacy teams are reporting that EPS4 continues to be used when nomination would have been more appropriate.

CPWY wants the PCN CP Reps to be aware of the CPWY actions in response to the use of EPS4 and the key messages in relation to EPS4.

As the use of EPS4 is having significant impacts on community pharmacy teams, PCN CP Representatives are encouraged to highlight the issues around EPS4 and the challenges it creates across the primary care system, in PCN and community Partnership meetings.

Even if PCN CP Reps are not in a position to raise this directly with their PCN it is important that you are aware of this issue and the CPWY response.

EPS4 Impacts

The impacts of using EPS4 rather than nomination are:

- **Patient safety** - patients are not always getting the medication prescribed in a timely manner through EPS4. When EPS4 is used a patient must present to a pharmacy and the pharmacy must then be able to locate the prescription on the NHS Spine. Patients are not routinely presenting to community pharmacies with a token or barcode, so pharmacy teams cannot efficiently locate the prescription. We are getting reports that patients delay in asking for the prescription as patients are assuming that the pharmacy will know that they have a new prescription, as would happen if the script was nominated to the pharmacy. We know that similar circumstances where a pharmacy is not informed that a patient has a prescription, have led to a patient death. Coroners letter: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017-0290-Response-by-NHS-Digital.pdf>
- **Community pharmacy time** - locating an EPS4 prescription is not a quick and easy process (unless the patient is provided with a token / barcode) and the unnecessary use of EPS4 is putting additional burden on community pharmacy teams.

As the primary care community, we should all work together to reduce the current use of EPS4 across West Yorkshire. Reports from community pharmacy teams is that EPS4 is being used when nomination (one-off or routine) would be more appropriate. [The NHSDigital guidance](#) is clear that EPS4 prescriptions should only be used if other options are not suitable.

EPS4 Audit and Impact on Community Pharmacy

CPWY has undertaken an audit. This shows the use of EPS4 in the last 4 weeks as a proportion of all scripts issued:

Bradford 3998, 1% of total scripts
Calderdale 864, 0.65% of total scripts
Huddersfield 2898, 1.97% of total scripts
Leeds 5715, 1.2% of total scripts
Wakefield 2580 0.96% of total scripts

This equates to roughly 670 hours a week across West Yorkshire pharmacies.

Almost 18 FTE of healthcare staff time per week in West Yorkshire pharmacies.

Equivalent to 90 working days lost per week in West Yorkshire pharmacies.

This impact is significant. We should show a commitment to working more proactively together as primary care to help reduce the use of EPS4, reducing the risks to patients and supporting community pharmacy teams in enabling a better use of their valuable time.

CPWY Action

CPWY is asking that CCGs and PCNs take ownership of the issues that are being felt within the community pharmacy network and work with CPWY and community pharmacies locally to reduce and alleviate the unnecessary additional workload that community pharmacy is currently experiencing. This increase in demand and workload is impacting the resilience of community pharmacy. This is likely to constrain the ability for community pharmacy to provide services, especially if we see additional demands as a result of winter pressures. As outlined above the inappropriate use of EPS4 is also a patient safety issue.

EPS4 Key Messages

Using EPS during remote consultations is now routine within general practice. NHS Digital updated its [guidance for use of EPS within remote consultations](#).

The guidance is for EPS prescribers and pharmacy teams. The guidance notes that:

- Nominations should still continue to be used wherever possible.
- One-off nomination is an additional, and preferred, alternative to use instead of EPS4.
- EPS4 (non-nominated) prescriptions should only be used if other options are not suitable.

For [EPS Phase 4](#) prescribing, if the patient cannot be given the printed EPS4 token, other information should be provided to them instead. Ideally the prescription barcode should be provided where possible. Some GP practices can copy this and send it by email or text message to the patient using their clinical system.

If no nominated pharmacy is recorded, you can still issue electronically and just give your patient the token number. To copy barcode – after issuing, go to Prescription History, click on the relevant FP10, highlight ETP barcode in the right hand pane.

TEXT MESSAGE TO PATIENT – INSERT TOKEN NUMBER (HOW TO ABOVE)

“Dear patient

Prescription code:

Your prescription has been issued electronically. To collect your medication please provide this code to any community pharmacy in England. To change an existing pharmacy nomination please download the NHS App.”

If pharmacy teams receive the prescription barcode from the patient, it can be used to pull down the prescription onto the pharmacy PMR system.

As a last resort, the EPS Tracker may be used within the pharmacy to locate an EPS prescription (e.g. via use of the NHS number) but it should be noted that this is not an efficient way for a pharmacy to locate a prescription.

For further information for pharmacy teams on EPS4 see: <https://psnc.org.uk/dispensing-supply/eps/deployment-status-and-future-plans/eps-future-plans/full-eps/>

PCN CP Rep Suggested Actions

- Raise the impacts of EPS4 with your PCN
- Ask them to reinforce [NHSDigital guidance](#) that nominations should continue to be used wherever possible and one-off nomination is an additional, and preferred, alternative to use instead of EPS4. NB see EPS4 information in [CPWY key messages document](#).
- GP practices can review EPS stats through the [EPS dashboard](#) to identify GP practice EPS4 stats to identify how often EPS4 is used by the practice
- Ask that practices ensure when EPS4 prescribing is used, that the prescribers routinely provide the prescription barcode to the patient. To mitigate the impacts of EPS4 a patient must either be given the printed EPS4 token or provided with the prescription barcode (eg by text). It must clearly be communicated to the patient that they must present the barcode to the community pharmacy.