

Correct as of 11 June 2020

**Direction of Prescriptions**

The CCG has been made aware that at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic a GP Practice took action to increase the number of patients using the electronic prescription service (EPS), to reduce footfall into the GP Practice and reduce the need for the collection of paper prescriptions, in line with the [national request from NHS England sent to all GP Practices on 19th March 2020](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/preparedness-letter-primary-care-19-march-2020.pdf). This is indeed what we encourage and support.

However, at the same time, the GP Practice also decided to nominate a pharmacy for the patient by sending a text message. Nominating a pharmacy on behalf of a patient, without informed consent from the patient is not allowed and is deemed as direction of prescriptions by the GP Practice. Direction of prescriptions is a very serious matter and there has been no change to the current regulation in this regard.

Please see below several sources of guidance on the direction of prescriptions

# **Direction of prescriptions**

The term ‘direction of prescriptions’ is used to describe the exercise of undue influence by a medical practice over the choice of where a patient takes or sends their prescription to be dispensed. It can also be used to describe situations where pharmacy owners and pharmacists encourage medical practitioners to recommend their pharmacy, by way of offering a gift or reward.

Prescription direction should not take place. Patients are entitled to make decisions about where they want their prescriptions to be dispensed; therefore, if a patient prefers to use a particular pharmacy, the NHS Constitution requires that this preference is respected.

[NHS England letter to pharmacies](https://psnc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Directing-of-Perscriptions-covering-letter-FINAL.pdf)

The poster can be downloaded below and a copy has been sent to all pharmacies in the October edition of Community Pharmacy News which will arrive later during October 2015.

[Poster on freedom of choice](https://psnc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Poster-combatting-prescription-direction-FINAL-MAIN.pdf) (pdf)

BMA and PSNC Joint Guidance – Jan 2020

<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/prescribing/prescription-direction-to-certain-pharmacies>

GMC Guidance

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/learning-materials/prescription-direction>

All GP Practices are encouraged to enable and utilise EPS, in line with the [letter sent from NHSE to primary care on 19th March 2020](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/preparedness-letter-primary-care-19-march-2020.pdf).

The guidance regarding direction of prescriptions has not changed/been relaxed during the Covid-19 pandemic, patients must be offered choice and the patient must nominate the preferred pharmacy, not be led to a specific pharmacy by a GP Practice.

The [guidance on electronic repeat dispensing (eRD) has recently changed – 04.06.2020](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0546-electronic-repeat-dispensing-letter-4-june-2020.pdf)  and the latest guidance regarding eRD temporarily relaxes the need for patient consent for eRD. This does not affect the rules regarding nominating a pharmacy, the patient must still nominate their preferred pharmacy, as detailed above.

If you are unsure about anything related to the content of this email please seek advice and guidance from the CCG Medicines Management Team at VOYCCG.Rxline@nhs.net