

GP referral pathway to NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service for minor illness

What is it?

GP referral to the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS) is a new pathway that practices can use to refer patients with minor illness, for a same day consultation with a community pharmacist.

When a patient with minor illness symptoms phones the practice requesting an appointment, they are referred for a consultation with a community pharmacist and with their consent, an electronic referral message is sent to their chosen pharmacy.

Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, the pharmacist will either contact the patient by phone to carry out the consultation, arrange for them to attend the pharmacy if appropriate, or offer a video consultation.

The pharmacist will take the patient's medical history and ask about symptoms and any current medication. Following the consultation, the pharmacist will offer self-care advice and may sell the patient an over the counter product if appropriate and they agree.

Where symptoms suggest something more serious, the pharmacist will help the patient to arrange an urgent GP appointment or escalate to an urgent care setting such as the Emergency Department if needed. The pharmacist will make a record of the outcome and send it to the patient's GP by secure digital message.

Why should practices use the service?

As practices begin to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination programme, this greater use of pharmacists' expertise can help enable patients to be seen quickly and at a time convenient to them, increasing capacity within general practice for the treatment of patients with higher acuity needs. We estimate the service could free up more than 20 million GP appointments a year.

The pathway has been introduced following successful pilots around the country, which shows it be very popular with patients and practices alike.

How can practices start using the service?

Practices can choose when they want to start using the new service and are being encouraged to do so. Implementation is being led regionally and Primary Care Networks in conjunction with LMCs, LPCs and local community pharmacies are being asked to agree how they are going to work together to implement the service.

See [here](#) for further information and resources about the GP referral pathway, including details of who to contact in each region to get started with implementation.