

Social Distancing and Infection Control Risk Review Template for community pharmacies (v1)



Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Government guidance to pharmacy contractors and their staff is to:

- Seek to maintain two metre social distancing during the outbreak and if this is not practical;
- Seek to minimise the risks for pharmacy staff and patients; and
- Consider the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for direct patient contact and other appropriate use.

While pharmacy staff may decide to wear face masks when providing face to face care to patients, use of PPE alone cannot provide full protection from infection with the coronavirus. So far during the pandemic, supplies of PPE have been constrained and it is likely that will continue to be the case for some time to come; over-reliance on PPE, as opposed to also implementing other measures to support social distancing is not an appropriate or sustainable approach to take. It is also essential that hygiene measures, such as regular hand washing, continue to be followed.

Why review the situation now?

All pharmacies have already put in place arrangements to support social distancing and to reduce the risk of spread of infections, but as the progress of the pandemic continues, it is clear that we will need to maintain social distancing and COVID-19 related infection control processes for many months to come, until the point at which a pandemic vaccine becomes available and a mass vaccination programme is undertaken in the UK.

As the pandemic continues and we all get used to living and working in a “new normal” situation, people’s consciousness of the need to maintain social distances at all times may reduce and consequently new or additional measures at each pharmacy may need to be taken to ensure distancing is maintained on an ongoing basis.

For many pharmacies, the peak demand of the early days of the pandemic has now diminished and as contractors and their teams may have a little more time to reflect on their experiences so far during the pandemic, now may be an opportune time to consider how well social distancing has been maintained and what else could potentially be done to ensure it continues to be maintained over the months to come.

This risk assessment template will help you to identify further potential changes which could be made to your pharmacy environment or procedures during the pandemic to increase the safety of staff and patients, by assisting all to maintain a two metre social distance from others, wherever possible, and ensure the ongoing application of other appropriate infection control procedures.

How to complete the risk review

Please complete this risk review tool as a team to help you identify potential risks and changes that could be made to the pharmacy environment or procedures. After you have discussed as a team the findings of the initial risk review, please complete the reasonable measures to be taken section, detailing any changes that have been agreed and will be put in place. This will include changes to practices and procedures, but it should also capture what cannot be changed for practical reasons, as inevitably the environment of individual pharmacies will determine whether some changes are able to be implemented.

In time, you will also want to review the assessment to determine how effective the measures put in place have been and whether further changes are necessary.

Pharmacy name		Address	
Date of initial assessment		Initial assessment carried out by:	

Consideration	Initial assessment and measures already implemented	Reasonable measures to be taken	Date reviewed
The dispensary and medicines counter			
1) Is there any non-essential equipment that can be moved to make more space? For example, any moveable units or tables. Can some essential equipment or workstations be moved, to support social distancing?			
2) Are there any non-essential items or equipment on the benches or the medicines counter that can be moved? Has any clutter been cleared away?			
3) Is the dispensary floor clear of all boxes and non-essential items to create as much space as possible?			
4) Are you able to mark 2m zones on the floor using tape to help ensure only one colleague is within a zone at any time?			
5) Have you installed screens on the medicines counter and elsewhere (where appropriate) to provide physical protection for staff? Ideally screens should extend well above head height.			

Working practices – ensure patient safety remains the highest priority

<p>6) Are there any changes that can be made to the timing of undertaking specific tasks to help maximise social distancing?</p> <p>Can some tasks be undertaken elsewhere in the pharmacy, e.g. using the consultation room or secondary dispensing locations, such as rooms used for MCA dispensing?</p>			
<p>7) Is it possible to change the shift patterns of team members to reduce the number of staff in the pharmacy at any one time (dependent on workload)?</p> <p>Could you deploy “isolated teams/shifts”, i.e. separate teams that do not meet, to reduce the risk of any viral transmission?</p> <p>Can the scheduling of staff breaks be altered to support effective social distancing?</p>			
<p>8) Are there any changes to the working practices and processes that can be made to reduce the number of staff that are dealing directly with patients and the public?</p>			
<p>9) Are there any changes to the way in which medicines are delivered by wholesalers or couriers that could support social distancing?</p> <p>For example, can you review where delivery drivers are asked to place boxes or tote trays to ensure they can maintain social distancing from staff? Likewise, could you review where empty tote trays and returns are placed for collection?</p>			

<p>10) Can any changes be made to the process for arranging deliveries to shielded and other patients, including the use of appropriate volunteers?</p> <p>Greater use of deliveries, including by volunteers, during the pandemic, could reduce the number of people visiting the pharmacy and help support social distancing.</p>			
<p>11) Have regular cleaning rotas been implemented to ensure high traffic areas within the pharmacy and items such as doors handles and counters which will be touched by patients and customers on a regular basis are cleaned multiple times each day?</p> <p>Likewise, are high traffic/use areas within the dispensary and other non-public areas being cleaned on a regular basis, e.g. keyboards and mice which are used by multiple staff members?</p>			
<p>12) Have you reviewed how you handle medicines returned by patients for disposal, to reduce the risk of cross-infection?</p> <p>Joint guidance has been issued on managing returned medicines by the national pharmacy bodies and it can be found via the PSNC website (link below).</p>			
Patients and customers			
<p>13) Have you assessed the maximum number of people that can be in the public areas of the pharmacy, while being able to maintain a safe, social distance?</p> <p>Are there any changes which can be made to the number or way in which, patients and customers come into and leave the pharmacy,</p>			

<p>to support social distancing and compliance with the maximum safe “capacity” of the public areas of the pharmacy?</p> <p>For example, restricting the number of people that can be within the pharmacy at any one time.</p>			
<p>14) Are there any additional changes that can be made to help patients and customers to maintain a social distance from each other and from pharmacy staff?</p> <p>Are posters or notices prominently displayed to remind patients and customers of the need for social distancing?</p> <p>Have 2m gaps been marked on the floor using tape or other appropriate materials to guide patients and customers on keeping their distance?</p> <p>Can you use physical barriers, ropes or other materials to create a buffer area in front of the medicines counter?</p> <p>Are any changes or resources also required outside the pharmacy to assist patients and customers to maintain a social distance and to manage queues, e.g. signage, barriers, a process for prioritising service for other healthcare professionals or pre-arranged volunteers collecting prescriptions for patients?</p>			
<p>15) Are there any changes to the processes for the presentation of prescriptions and payment for prescriptions and medicines that can be made, e.g. encouraging the use of contactless payments?</p>			

<p>16) Are there any changes that can be made to the conversations with patients on the telephone to ensure that those with COVID-19 symptoms do not present at the pharmacy?</p>			
<p>17) Are there any changes required so the pharmacy can comply with the guidance in the NHS England and NHS Improvement Community Pharmacy SOP on dealing with a person suffering from COVID-19 who is too ill to return home and where an ambulance should be called?</p>			
<p>18) If you cannot maintain a 2m distance from patients when in your consulting room, are there other ways you can facilitate confidential discussions with patients, including people with disabilities, such as a hearing impairment?</p> <p>For example, can you restrict the flow of patients into the pharmacy, so a confidential discussion can be had with a patient in the public area of the pharmacy, without other people being able to overhear? Alternatively, can a consultation happen by telephone (subject to any service requirements), to ensure privacy for the patient?</p>			
Pharmacy Staff			
<p>19) Are staff satisfied that they understand fully and are acting on the Government guidelines for staying at home when required?</p> <p>Do they understand how they can access COVID-19 testing?</p>			

<p>20) Do staff fully understand the current guidance on use and disposal of PPE, where this is available?</p> <p>Do staff also understand any guidelines on the best way to launder uniform/clothing worn at work to maximise hygiene?</p>			
<p>21) Have hand-washing breaks been adopted within the pharmacy to ensure staff can wash their hands on a regular basis?</p> <p>Are posters promoting hand hygiene prominently displayed within the pharmacy to act as a reminder to staff?</p>			
<p>22) Are there any other suggestions and changes that pharmacy staff consider appropriate to reduce COVID-19 risks in the pharmacy?</p>			

Guidance and links to further information on COVID-19 related topics can be found at psnc.org.uk/covid-19

If you have suggestions on how this document could be enhanced, please send them to COVID-19@psnc.org.uk

The risk review template has been developed from work initially undertaken by Lloydspharmacy; PSNC is grateful to Lloydspharmacy for agreeing to share their risk assessment template.