

**Some time ago some community pharmacy owners introduced free home delivery services as a unique selling point (USP) to give their businesses a marketing advantage over others, who quickly followed. Up until recently free delivery services were widespread and their ubiquity has led many to view this service as part of the template for how all pharmacies work.**

The current challenging financial situation in community pharmacy has left pharmacy business owners no option to analyse their costs and overheads, make some difficult decisions and take decisive action to protect their business and the people they employ. For many this has meant stopping, reducing or changing for home delivery services to focus on what is contractually required of them, and within the funding available to them.

Throughout 2019 a significant amount of media coverage prompted discussion on this topic, resulting in misinformation and conjecture. The purpose of this briefing note is to help those working with community pharmacies understand the current position on pharmacy home delivery services.

1	<b>Some pharmacies have started to charge all but the most vulnerable patients to have medicines delivered to their home.</b>	<p>There is no legislative or contractual obligation for a pharmacy to offer delivery services to all the people who use their services and to charge for the service, or not.</p> <p>Where this happens the pharmacy business owner is simply adapting what their business offers in response to a challenging financial environment.</p>
2	<b>Delivery charges will not apply to all patients</b>	<p>The most vulnerable patients will not miss out. Patients will not be charged for deliveries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the responsible pharmacist determines that an delivery is required.</li> <li>• Where specific NHS reimbursement criteria (as specified in the Drug Tariff) states that pharmacies are required to offer delivery at no charge. For example, specified appliances</li> <li>• Where specific conditions of service do not allow delivery charges. For example, distance selling.</li> </ul>
3.	<b>There is no consistency in approach</b>	<p>To deliver, or not, is a business decision. It's a private, not NHS, service within a competitive and financially challenging business environment.</p> <p>Where delivery charges occur the three LPCs in Sussex and Surrey advise pharmacy owners to inform the people who use their services and display delivery charges (and terms and conditions of use) to help their customers decide whether to use their service, or not.</p>

4.	<b>Communicating with patients</b>	<p>Home delivery is a private service provided from pharmacy that may be accessed by patients on their register. There may be a cost to some patients, with exceptions to cover the most vulnerable patients.</p> <p>Clinicians will want to make it clear that patients are free to choose from which pharmacy to have their prescribed medicines dispensed and that choosing one which meets their needs is important.</p> <p>Clinicians should encourage their patient to speak to their pharmacist directly to get an:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explanation of the pharmacy’s policy on deliveries</li> <li>• Understanding of exemptions and explore how the pharmacy might continue to deliver to the patient if a free service is stopping</li> </ul> <p>Clinicians must not recommend a pharmacy to patients.</p>
5.	<b>Best practice for clinicians</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware that all pharmacies are different. Please speak to your pharmacist to find out about their policies and procedures</li> <li>• If an emergency delivery is required clinicians are requested to phone the pharmacy and speak to the responsible pharmacist to discuss available options.</li> <li>• Please share this information with colleagues and frontline staff.</li> </ul> <p>In October 2019, Surrey &amp; Sussex Local Medical Committees (LMCs) issued the following notice to GP practices:</p> <p><i>Some pharmacies may be considering charging patients for domiciliary delivery of medicines, a service many pharmacies have offered in the past, or to do so if patients do not use an on-line ordering system. This is not an NHS service and is a commercial matter for pharmacists if they wish to make such direct charges: it is not a matter for General Practitioners to necessarily comment on</i></p>
6.	<b>The future of free delivery services from pharmacy</b>	<p>Health commissioners such as NHS England and CCGs (clinical commissioning groups) are responsible for ensuring the provision of essential health services to meet the needs of local patients. It should be for them to decide alongside all other demands on their budgets.</p>

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Community Pharmacy Surrey and Sussex is the unified local voice for community pharmacy for Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs). All three LPCs represent, support, develop and promote NHS Community Pharmacy in Surrey and Sussex. Working closely with the local NHS, including NHS England Area Teams, CCGs and local government, we are responsible for advancing the enhanced role of community pharmacy to ensure it plays an active part in promoting health and wellbeing.

**If you have questions or need additional information, please contact us at [LPC@communitypharmacys.co.uk](mailto:LPC@communitypharmacys.co.uk)**