



Dear Colleague

ADDITIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES – PHARMACY FIRST SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Summary

1. This Circular reminds health boards and community pharmacy contractors about key service requirements of the NHS Pharmacy First Scotland service.

Background

2. [Circular PCA\(P\)\(2020\) 13](#), issued on 1 July 2020, introduced NHS Pharmacy First Scotland as a new service in community pharmacies. The Circular included a combined set of Directions and a service specification which together provide the legal framework for the provision and operation of NHS Pharmacy First Scotland.

3. [Circular PCA\(P\)\(2020\) 16](#), issued on 11 August 2020, set out the arrangements for Pharmacy First Plus, the common clinical conditions independent prescribing element of the service.

Details

4. NHS Pharmacy First Scotland, including Pharmacy First Plus, continue to be intended primarily as face to face services, where consultations with individuals are in response to symptoms of minor self-limiting conditions. Consultations conducted as part of an online service are not in accordance with the requirements set out in the Directions for the service (Annex D of [Circular PCA\(P\)\(2020\) 13](#)).

5. The NHS logo may only be used in specific circumstances and there are nationally approved publicity materials that should be used for NHS Pharmacy First Scotland.

25 June 2025

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards

For information

NHS Directors of Pharmacy
Director of Practitioner
Services, NHS NSS

Enquiries to:

Pharmacy & Medicines
Division
1st Floor East Rear
St Andrew's House
EDINBURGH
EH1 3DG
Email:
PharmacyTeam@gov.scot



Pharmacy First consultations

6. The expectation is that consultations with individuals are conducted face to face unless there are exceptional circumstance. Other than using NHS Near Me, consultations conducted as part of an online service are not permitted. The **Key Principles** for NHS Pharmacy First Scotland (set out in Annex A of [Circular PCA\(P\)\(2020\) 13](#)) state at paragraph 13:

13. Other than NHS Near Me consultations, NHS PFS consultations conducted as part of an online service are not permitted. NHS PFS is designed primarily as a face to face service with consultations taking place in person in pharmacy premises. Telephone consultations or NHS Near Me consultations can be conducted on pharmacy premises but only where face to face consultations in person in pharmacy premises are not practicable such as in the following examples:

- The patient is housebound
- The patient is too ill to go to the pharmacy, or may have a contagious illness
- The patient is resident in a care home
- The patient is self-isolating or 'shielding' during the Covid-19 pandemic
- The patient is unable to attend the pharmacy due to work, caring responsibilities or issues with transport.

This list is not exhaustive and the pharmacist should make a reasoned assessment to the appropriateness of remote consultations.

7. In addition, the **Terms and Conditions** for the provision of an NHS Pharmacy First Scotland service included at Schedule 2 of the **Directions** (Annex D of [Circular PCA\(P\)\(2020\) 13](#)), set out the following requirement at paragraph 5:

5. Other than NHS Near Me consultations, the NHS PFS service must not be provided as an online service or as part of any online service.

8. Requirements on providing consultations are also included in the **Service Specification** in schedule 4 of the **Directions** (Annex D of [Circular PCA\(P\)\(2020\) 13](#)). Paragraph 4.3.1, which makes clear that consultations are to be offered **in response to presenting symptoms**, is as follows:

4.3.1. Care provided through NHS PFS includes the presentation, assessment and treatment of symptoms. The pharmacist confirms the eligibility of the person for the NHS PFS service, assesses the person and considers the most appropriate course(s) of action, the counselling and advice needs and any requirements for follow up or referral. The consultation must be provided by the pharmacist or by trained staff under the direct supervision of the pharmacist. Telephone consultations and NHS Near Me consultations must be conducted in pharmacy premises, within the NHS PFS provider's contracted opening hours and are only permitted where consultations in person in pharmacy premises are not practicable. Consultations conducted online or as part of any online service, other than NHS Near Me consultations, are not permitted.

Use of NHS Scotland and NHS Board logos

9. The NHS Pharmacy First Scotland **Directions** include requirements on how NHSScotland resources / materials can be used. The **Terms and Conditions** at schedule 2 of the Directions provide the following at paragraph 2:

2. An NHS PFS provider may only issue or display the publicity material and patient information leaflet made available by Scottish Ministers in respect of NHS PFS and the provision of the NHS PFS service to promote and raise public awareness of the service.

10. **The Key Principles** also include specific wording about how services are promoted. Paragraph 7 is as follows:

7. NHS PFS providers may only issue or display the publicity material and the patient information leaflet made available by Scottish Ministers in respect of the NHS PFS service and the provision of the NHS PFS service to promote and raise public awareness of the service. Also, if listing the NHS PFS service on a services offered panel, pharmacy leaflet or website then the NHS PFS provider must not suggest that the service is exclusive to that pharmacy.

11. It is important that pharmacy contractors clearly differentiate at all times between private and NHSScotland-funded services and consider how these should be respectively promoted. Community pharmacies can only promote NHS Pharmacy First Scotland and other NHS pharmacy services with NHS Scotland or NHS Board-supplied resources.

12. Most community pharmacies have the NHS Scotland logo on signage, permitted as part of the NHS Scotland services they offer. In such instances, the NHS Scotland logo can only be used for promotion of NHS Scotland-funded services that sit within the national framework and locally arranged services with NHS Boards.

Pharmacy First Scotland resources

13. APS Group printers hold stocks of Pharmacy First patient leaflets and can send copies out on request. Their email address to request leaflets is:- Stockorders.DPPAS@theapsgroup.com The leaflet is also translated into 22 languages, available online to download and print off at [Supporting documents - NHS Pharmacy First Scotland: information for patients - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/publications/2024/01/Supporting_documents_-_NHS_Pharmacy_First_Scotland_information_for_patients_-_gov.scot)

14. The Scottish Government has also developed a Pharmacy First Communications Toolkit which is available online at - [Campaign Assets | Scottish Government Marketing News](https://www.gov.scot/resources/publications/2024/01/Campaign_Assets_-_Scottish_Government_Marketing_News) This was in response to requests about what resources and images were available to help publicise it. The Toolkit is a collation of existing digital resources including the patient leaflet and poster but also some images NHS24 have used on social media. There are some key messages which are intended to provide consistency when sharing information about Pharmacy First. The Toolkit resources can be used by Boards and by community pharmacy contractors as long as use is in line with the Directions (which includes the Terms and Conditions and Service Specification).

15. Guidance on Pharmacy First for GP practice staff to aid with signposting is available online at - [nhs-pharmacy-first-scotland-202404.pdf](https://www.nhs.uk/pharmacy-first-scotland-202404.pdf)

16. The content of this Circular has been agreed with Community Pharmacy Scotland.

Action

17. Health Boards are asked to note the contents of this Circular and to bring it to the attention of community pharmacy contractors on their Pharmaceutical Lists and Area Pharmaceutical Committees.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Strath

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Pharmacy & Medicines Division