

To: • Selected GP practices [use list from Service Bridge as previous]

NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

16 September 2024

Dear colleagues,

Important patient safety issue update: Electronic notifications from community pharmacies to GPs

On 24 June, NHS England sent a note to those GP practices which may have been impacted by pharmacies that had a queue of post event message emails for their patients, following clinical service consultations for a range of services in community pharmacy.

The note advised practices to await further guidance following a national clinical review of the issue to assess next steps. This is now concluded.

We now request that GP practices take the following actions to support management of this patient safety issue:

1. Please verify with PharmOutcomes the email address the practice wants to use for electronic notifications from community pharmacy.

See Annex 1 for the process.

Verifying the practice email means that current and future emails will flow electronically to the practice.

2. Community pharmacy teams are clinically reviewing these queued messages in order of clinical priority.

The priority has been risk assessed by a clinical advisory group (CAG) convened by NHS England (see below).

If a local community pharmacy sends through any emails, take corrective clinical action.

This would include review and consideration of inclusion in patient record as per usual process.

Where patients have required GP practice follow up, community pharmacy teams will routinely inform patients to actively seek that advice.

3. If there are any concerns about potential patient harm because of delayed notifications following a pharmacy consultation, please report the incident using the 'Learning From Patient Safety Events' portal and use the code 'PharmacyPEM' for reporting purposes.

This technical patient safety issue impacts pharmacies using the PharmOutcomes IT system to record consultations and send electronic notifications to the patient's GP practice.

The queue of emails for service provision prior 1 June 2024 has been suppressed by PharmOutcomes.

As part of the security processes in PharmOutcomes, GP practices have been requested to routinely re-verify their email address.

Some GP practices may not be aware of this; and where the email has not been verified, a queue of notifications waiting to be sent electronically from the pharmacy to your GP practice has occurred.

We understand that your practice has been affected by this issue.

If a pharmacy system does not send the email electronically, the community pharmacy is required to use suitable alternative arrangements (usually by sending a hard copy of the post event message) to communicate clinical information.

NHS England has convened a CAG supported by the National Deputy Medical Director and Regional Primary Care Medical Director. Membership of this group includes GPs and pharmacists.

This group has undertaken a risk assessment of the queued emails issue and made some recommendations based on patient safety risk.

Recommendations to community pharmacies are to prioritise and review notifications from 1 January 2023 for the blood pressure checks, contraception and pharmacy first services where clinically important information was identified for sharing with the patient's GP; for example, high/very high blood pressure, supply of medication.

We have also reminded pharmacists of the duty of candour and to contact patients as appropriate where clinical referral information to general practice was delayed.

Please contact your regional senior pharmacy integration leads and integrated care board community pharmacy clinical leads for any support.

Thank you for your help and support with this issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Morton', written in a cursive style.

Alex Morton

Group Director – Primary Care and Community Services Delivery
NHS England

Annex 1: Process for verifying email with PharmOutcomes

As part of the security processes in PharmOutcomes (EMIS Pinnacle system), GP practices are asked to routinely re-verify their email address. Some GP practices may not be aware of this and where the email has not been verified there may be a queue of notifications waiting to be sent electronically from the pharmacy to the GP practice.

To verify your email address with PharmOutcomes, so that current and future email notifications (post event messages) will flow electronically from community pharmacy to you via secure email rather than being sent to you as printed copies, the following process is advised:

1. GP surgeries need to visit www.emisnow.com, log in if they have an EMIS NOW account and follow the steps to raise a case.

If surgeries do not have an EMIS NOW account, or are unsure, they can use the Live Chat to request an account or raise a case. This ensures there is an audit trail for requests.

2. A ticket should contain the name and address of the GP surgery and an email address, which must be an NHS mail secure email.
3. This will normally be sent within 48 hours after the request is received/ acknowledgement email.

During busy periods this may be longer but the acknowledgement email containing ticket details should be sent within an hour of sending the request.

This contains the ticket number, and users can use this information to ask for an update on their request.

4. An email will be sent to the nominated email address containing their full details.
5. The email will ask for GP surgery to confirm its details, which should be done as soon as possible.
6. Once confirmed, outstanding messages will flow immediately as it is an automated process.