

NATIONAL PHARMACY ASSOCIATION

A guide for selecting volunteers in the pharmacy, roles conducted by volunteers and delivery of medicines (COVID-19)

Information for the Owner, Superintendent Pharmacist and Responsible Pharmacist

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Introduction

This guidance aims to help pharmacists, including pharmacy owners and superintendent pharmacists, who may have to make decisions on the legal and ethical boundaries in the interest of public health during the COVID-19 pandemic. We expect members to follow the law at all times and only consider working outside of the law when all other options have been exhausted as per GPhC guidance. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances where in the best interests of patient safety and public health, the pharmacist has to make a decision outside of expected normal practice.

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) have advised that their regulatory standards are designed to be flexible and to provide a framework for risk-assessed decision-making in a wide range of situations. This guidance can be found at: <https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/news/how-we-will-continue-regulate-light-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Where a pharmacist decides to make a judgement call, they should ensure they are able to justify why they have made that decision and demonstrate that they did so with the necessary precautions in place to minimise risk.

Contemporaneous record-keeping is strongly advised in the event that the pharmacist is called upon to justify their decision(s) at a future date.

Scope of this resource

This resource provides guidance on using volunteers in the pharmacy during the COVID-19 pandemic on topics including:

- Training for volunteers
- Recruiting volunteers
- How to minimise risk to patient safety
- Delivering using volunteers

Training

As resources are stretched and front line pharmacies struggle to cope, pharmacies may have to accept volunteers in the interest of patient safety. It's important to be mindful that patient safety should be at the heart of all decisions and that volunteers need to be appropriately trained to carry out specified tasks.

Available training/guidance for volunteers working in pharmacy include:

- NPA Pandemic training – for volunteers to support your local community pharmacy
- NPA Delivering Pharmacy Items SOP
- [RPS volunteering guidance](#)

Volunteers understanding good hygiene protocol

Volunteers must understand and follow the good hygiene protocol at all times when working within the pharmacy. NHS England provides comprehensive advice on handwashing and how effective handwashing helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is vital that all staff in the pharmacy are trained to wash their hands **properly**.

A training video on handwashing protocol can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/> and guidance on good handwashing technique and how to use sanitiser effectively can be found in the NPA's [Pandemic training guide for volunteers](#).

Volunteers must understand social distancing, including keeping a minimum distance of two metres from patients and the public. Volunteers should also use personal protective equipment (PPE) where appropriate and either wash their hands after each patient interaction or use hand sanitiser (minimum 60% alcohol content).

What can volunteers help with?

There are a lot of things that volunteers can help with in a pharmacy, without having to undertake accredited training. Examples of such activities include:

- Managing the entry of customers into the pharmacy
- Greeting patients, helping with non-medical queries and signposting if required
- Informing patients about the pharmacy's hygiene protocol and managing social distancing in the pharmacy
- Helping with a robust cleaning protocol (for example, wiping down surfaces regularly)
- Printing out posters and managing the pharmacy information display
- Helping put non-medicine stock away on the shop floor

As a pharmacist, when making a decision regarding whether a volunteer is capable of helping with a task, it is important to understand the limitations of their expertise. Ultimately, patient safety has to be considered before any decision is made.

What can volunteers *not* do?

The GPhC still requires anyone undertaking dispensing activities to either be trained in or be working towards an accredited qualification. This means general volunteers **will not** be able to help with:

- Dispensing medicines
- Handling medicines, including at the counter
- Providing medical advice
- Selling medical products over the counter
- Handing out checked medication bags
- Collecting prescriptions from surgeries

It's important to agree the referral pathway so that the volunteer knows where to refer queries (HCA, Pharmacy Technician, Pharmacist).

NHS volunteer responders (England)

NHS England is currently recruiting volunteers to help vulnerable people stay safe and well; the aim is to get 250,000 volunteers. Recruitment to this scheme has temporarily been paused while NHS England reviews a large number of applications. NHS England has said that these volunteers may be helping with vital tasks such as:

- driving patients to appointments
- bringing patients home from the hospital
- making phone calls to check on people who are isolating at home

NHS England mentioned that the responders group is not intended to replace local groups but is an additional service provided by the NHS. Members of the public can sign up to be a part of this initiative at <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>

If you are hiring a volunteer through the NHS volunteer responders scheme, it is essential that you follow guidance detailed in the following PDF document:

https://www.goodsamapp.org/assets/pdf/Getting_started_as_a_NHS_Transport_Volunteer.pdf

This document outlines duties of an NHS Responder volunteer and the practices that they must abide by.

Volunteer schemes in Scotland and Northern Ireland

For **Scotland**, the volunteer scheme information can be found here: <https://www.readyscotland.org/> and the information on volunteer support for community pharmacy in Northern Ireland, may be found here:

http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Letter%20to%20CPs_Volunteer%20Support%20for%20CP.pdf

Selecting volunteers

It will be at the discretion of the responsible pharmacist as to whether they allow members of the public to volunteer in the pharmacy. This will essentially be a judgement call – the pharmacist will have to try to judge the motives and intentions of the individual. A risk analysis can be undertaken to determine whether a member of the public is suitable for volunteering in the pharmacy. Pharmacists should also be clear from the outset with the member of the public in relation to their role and its limitations. The diagram below illustrates who to consider in the first instance as a volunteer.

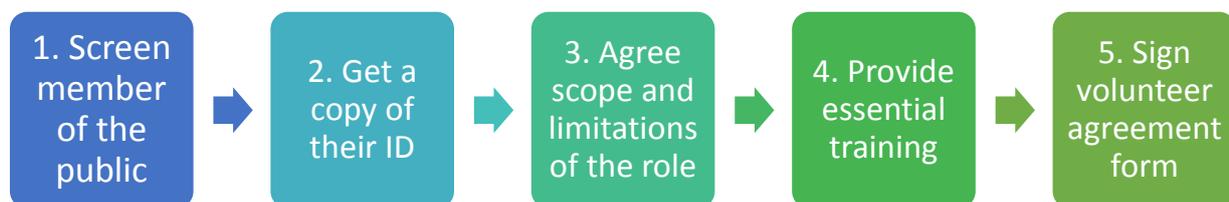


Please note that although the diagram suggests one group of people may be more suitable as volunteers than another, this will not always be the case. You will have to make a judgement on a case-by-case basis.

Five steps on recruiting a volunteer

Once the pharmacist is satisfied that the member of the public is suitable, there should be a robust protocol in place so that the pharmacist can demonstrate why they made the decision to allow the member of public to help, and how they ensured risk was minimised.

The following is an example of a protocol that could be implemented and it is the responsibility of the **superintendent pharmacist/owner** to define the exact process:



1. **Screen member of the public** – ask the member of the public questions to determine whether they are suitable for the task. At this stage, the owner/superintendent/responsible pharmacist will have to ask questions and determine whether the person is suitable **and** that they have the right intentions.
2. **Get a copy of ID** – the owner/superintendent/responsible pharmacist/delegated member of the team should make a copy of the volunteer’s ID and keep it on record in case they need this information at a later date. Suitable forms of ID include:
 - i. Passport
 - ii. Photo card drivers licence
3. **Agree scope and limitations of the role** – the owner/superintendent/responsible pharmacist should set clear boundaries and explain exactly what role the member of the public will be undertaking. The owner/superintendent pharmacist/responsible pharmacist must cover legislation and explain to the member of public that, as they are not suitably qualified, they will be limited in what they can help with. It is essential they understand this and have a referral pathway in place for anything outside of their scope. **(Please note it will be the overall responsibility of the responsible pharmacist to ensure they are happy with the contribution of the volunteer when they are on duty.)**
4. **Provide essential training** – this is a very important aspect of any such arrangement. The pharmacist needs to provide **basic** training to the volunteer involved. Examples could include:
 - a. Different areas of the pharmacy
 - b. Good hygiene and hand washing protocol
 - c. What to do if an individual says they have come into contact with someone with COVID-19
 - d. Roles and responsibilities and limitations of the role

- e. Referral protocol for all medical queries and all other queries outside of their scope
 - f. Fire safety within the pharmacy and other relevant health and safety training
 - g. Any role specific guidance
 - h. Patient confidentiality and SOPs
 - i. Cleaning protocol
 - j. Health and safety
5. **Sign volunteer agreement form** – the volunteer should sign the volunteer agreement form contained in **Appendix 1**.

Delivering medicines

When volunteers should be used for delivering medicines

In order to cope with delivery demand at this difficult time, pharmacists may be forced to consider alternatives if they no longer have the staff to deliver medication. Wherever possible, the responsible pharmacist/ superintendent pharmacist should try to ensure medication is delivered by someone who is appropriately trained.

First option – use employed, suitably trained delivery drivers

If possible, use a member of staff who is qualified in or working towards an accredited delivery driver course such as *Delivering Medicines Safely and Effectively*.

Second option – use trained pharmacy staff

The pharmacist themselves or another member of staff – preferably a registered pharmacy technician – may be able to deliver the medication (especially if the medication is high risk).

- This may be a good option if there are only one or two deliveries that need to be made, as the member of staff/pharmacist will have the appropriate training and will follow the good hygiene protocol described above
- Under the responsible pharmacist (RP) regulations, a pharmacist can leave the premises for up to two hours in any 24 hour period. If the pharmacy is still busy and the pharmacist decides to make an urgent delivery in person (as an absolute last resort), they should be contactable by phone/video link.



The preceding diagram shows appropriate steps to take (dependent on capacity) before considering volunteers.

Third option – consider using volunteers – this could include church groups or other local groups.

Please note: It will be at the discretion of the superintendent pharmacist and responsible pharmacist as to whether they allow volunteer members of the general public to make deliveries.

A risk assessment should be taken with the following points considered:

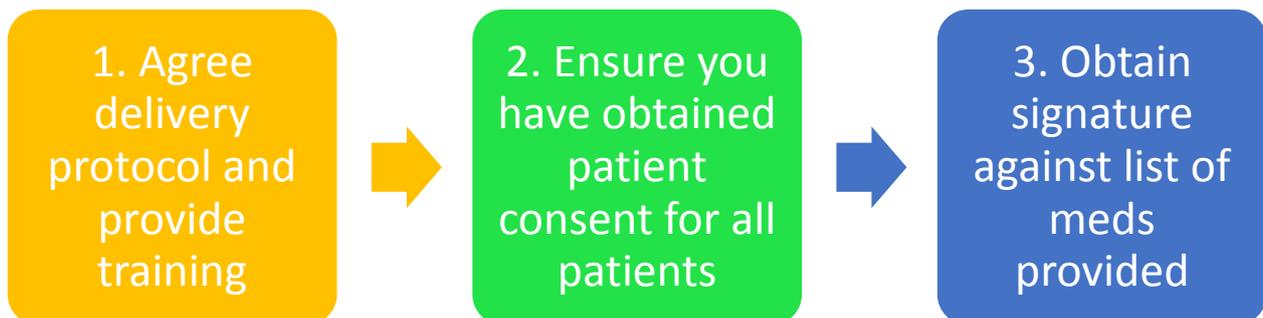
- The pharmacist must try to judge the motives and intentions of the person(s) volunteering themselves to deliver medication
- Extra caution should be taken with drugs which have the potential for abuse and misuse (for example, opioids, benzodiazepines and laxatives) and those of high cost.

Risk assessment for volunteers delivering medicines

We suggest doing a **risk analysis** to determine whether a member of the public is suitable for delivering medicines. It is important to be aware that members of the public should be considered **as a last resort**, once all other options have been exhausted. You should only use volunteers to deliver if no one is able to collect on the patients behalf and if the delivery driver is unable to deliver.

Three steps to developing a delivery service using volunteers

Once the pharmacist is satisfied that the member of the public is suitable, there should be a robust protocol in place so that the pharmacist can demonstrate why they made the decision to allow the member of public to deliver, and how they ensure risk was minimised. The following is an example of a protocol that could be implemented:



1. **Agree a delivery protocol and provide training** – this is a very important aspect of any such arrangement. The pharmacist needs to provide **basic** training to the individual/individuals – this can be achieved by signposting them to the SOP for delivering medicines, the NPA’s Pandemic training guide and other resources that may be relevant to the role of the delivery driver. Examples of learning points could include:
 - a. stability of medication in transport (fridge items)
 - b. good hygiene and hand washing protocol

- c. what to do if an individual delivering has to leave and self-isolate
 - d. how to deliver to different groups of people
 - e. vehicle safety and hygiene
 - f. what to do if patients ask for medical advice
 - g. how to complete a delivery sheet for audit purposes
2. **Ensure patient consent** is gained for all patients – the pharmacy should obtain verbal or written consent from all patients before giving their medication to another member of the public for delivery. Details of who gave the consent and the date should be recorded on the pharmacy’s patient medication record (PMR). The patient should be made aware that the bag will be **sealed** – if they received a delivery and the bag has been tampered with, they should be instructed to call the pharmacy immediately.
3. **Obtain signature against list of medicines** provided – the volunteer taking responsibility of the transit of the medication should be made to sign against a delivery sheet detailing:
- a. The patients for which they are delivering medication
 - b. Number of medications per sealed bag

For further information please contact the NPA Pharmacy Services team on 01727 891800 or email at: pharmacyservices@npa.co.uk.

Appendix 1 – Volunteer agreement form

Volunteer Agreement form

As a volunteer, it is essential that the pharmacist can trust you to help in a safe and effective manner. You must always follow instructions and put patient safety at the heart of everything you do as a volunteer in pharmacy.

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Date volunteer started | __ __ / __ __ / __ __ |
| Volunteer Name | |
| DBS/good character reference provided (Y/N) – please note that a DBS is mandatory if volunteer is going to be delivering medicines | |
| Occupation | |
| Pandemic training completed (Y/N) | |
| Details of additional training, including date completed | |
| Relevant SOPs read and signed (Y/N) | |
| Referral pathway agreed (Y/N) | |
| The terms of this arrangement must be followed at all times. I, the volunteer, agree to the following: | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I will follow all instructions set out by the pharmacist2. I will refer all medical queries to an appropriate member of the pharmacy team3. I will not access any information/records in the pharmacy beyond what is required for the role4. I will act in a manner that promotes public and staff safety5. I will inform the pharmacist immediately if I develop any symptoms of COVID-196. I will inform the pharmacist immediately if I have come into contact with anyone who has confirmed COVID-19 or displays symptoms of the virus | |
| Signed by the volunteer _____ Date _____ | |
| Signed for the pharmacy _____ Date _____ | |