EPS Phase 4

Wirral guidance on the deployment and operation of EPS Phase 4

Patients without a nominated pharmacy

EPS Phase 4 is available for roll-out nationally; in short, this allows patients without an EPS nomination to have prescriptions sent to the NHS Spine electronically, for them to be dispensed at a pharmacy of their choice. This is the point at which electronic rather than paper prescriptions become the default.

On Wirral the process has already begun and you may have noticed patients with tokens who have no nominated pharmacy. EPS Phase 4 prescriptions can also be pulled down by a pharmacy inputting the prescription ID number (normally printed under the token barcode) which has been sent by SMS message to a patient; alternatively a patient can give their NHS number to the pharmacy for them to use with the Prescription Tracker to locate the prescription.

Most procedures are the same once the prescription is downloaded from the Spine, however pharmacy teams need to ensure that they have relevant procedures in place to identify EPS Phase 4 tokens, how to manage situations when the patient presents with an SMS message and how to manage situations when the patient presents without a token.

Wirral GPs will be rolling this out, supported by Midlands & Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit (MLCSU) in the next few weeks and it is hoped this will be completed by the end of June 2020. The LPC will try to update contractors on local plans for Phase 4 roll-out to support local communications and ensure good service for patients; however, patients can attend **any** pharmacy so the LPC suggests that all pharmacy teams should be briefed on Phase 4.

1.   Nominations

NHS Digital are encouraging GP practices to ask all patients to nominate a pharmacy, and there has been a substantial increase in numbers nationally – between February 28 and March 27, 2020, more than 1.25 million new nominations were received. GP practices locally, with the support of MLCSU will be encouraging patients to nominate a pharmacy of their choice.

Pharmacies should encourage appropriate patients to set a nomination. Pharmacies should also encourage any patient presenting with an EPS4 token to nominate a pharmacy.

2.   Enabling EPS Phase 4

Pharmacy systems will already be set up to accept Phase 4 prescriptions. Pharmacies with any issues should contact their system suppliers.

3.   Tokens

Prior to the Covid-19 emergency, the change to the practice was straightforward for patients without a nominated pharmacy. A Phase 4 token is printed by the surgery and given to patient. The patient presents the token to a community pharmacy – who scan the barcode, download the prescription from the Spine and dispense it. *Remember, the electronic download is the legal prescription NOT the token.*

During the Covid-19 emergency, practices wish to reduce the number of patients attending to collect their paper Phase 4 token. NHS Digital have suggested that practices may choose to provide those patients (without a nomination) with an electronic message (text/email) containing the Prescription ID Number(s), to avoid patient visits to a GP practice.

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EPS 4 prescriptions can only contain up to 4 items. If more than 4 items are prescribed, there will be more than one prescription and therefore more than one Prescription ID Number.

When a patient provides a Prescription ID Number, it is recommended you check how many items / what items the patient is expecting before dispensing.

4.   Presenting at Pharmacy

Once the patient presents at the pharmacy, they will need to provide their printed Phase 4 token (if available). If a token was not given to the patient, they should have a Prescription ID Number(s) and/or NHS number. There needs to be mechanism within the pharmacy to allow them to pass the prescription ID number(s) to the pharmacy staff. Where this is not available the patient's NHS number can also be used to view the NHS prescription tracker, identify and then download any available prescriptions.

Pharmacies should consider:

- Maintaining patient confidentiality when receiving prescription ID and/or NHS numbers
- How to ensure social distancing whilst collecting this information
- Minimising infection/transmission risk from COVID-19 (e.g. avoid handling a patient's mobile phone if possible)
- Incorporating checking a patient's nomination status into this process and suggesting nomination is made if not already set
- Ensuring their SOPs reflect any changes made due to local EPS release 4 deployment

5.   Dispensing

The legal prescription is always the electronic prescription. You should scan the token to retrieve the prescription from the NHS Spine and ensure it is still valid. You should not dispense from the token alone. Please ensure your SOP's reflect this. *Remember, there is a chance that electronic prescriptions have already been downloaded by another pharmacy, so download the prescription before beginning to dispense.*

Pharmacies may wish to check and customise the PMR system and print settings to avoid automatically printing a white EPS dispensing token.

Pharmacies may wish to use a highlighting method (highlighter pen) on the 'Prescriber signature not required' printed information on the token, to identify that it is a Phase 4 token, not a barcoded paper prescription. EPS4 tokens are claimed for in the same way as nominated prescriptions, claimed electronically and only sent to the NHSBSA when exemption is needed to be validated.

6.   Further considerations
- **Pharmacy Systems**
  - ❖ Any issues with your pharmacy system and EPS Phase 4 please refer directly to your system supplier
  - ❖ Ensure relevant staff know how to process electronic prescriptions and have a NHS smartcard
  - ❖ Ensure all relevant staff are aware of the EPS Prescription tracker and are competent to use it to check the status of a prescription and search for the Prescription ID if the prescription is to be manually downloaded. Check the link is saved in favourites or on the desktop.

- **FP10s**
  At the GP surgery an FP10 will still print if:

- ❖ The prescription includes one or more non-dm+d items – the surgery will try to replace these with EPS compliant alternatives if possible
- ❖ PDS mismatch on patient demographics
- ❖ If the GP does not have their smartcard
- ❖ Border patients (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland)
- ❖ Controlled drugs :
  - ➢ Oral liquid methadone: Because it isn't possible for all dispensing systems to endorse electronic prescriptions for oral liquid methadone with a packaged dose endorsement (PDn), a paper FP10 prescription will still be generated for this drug to allow the pharmacy to claim the correct fees.
  - ➢ Instalment prescribing: EPS cannot be used for prescribing in instalments (FP10MDA) prescribing
  - ➢ Taken from https://digital.nhs.uk/services/electronic-prescription-service/controlled-drugs

N.B. Please ensure you are aware of these exclusions and you contact the surgery to discuss missing items or arrange suitable means to access the prescriptions

- **Post-dating**
  - ❖ Remember EPS prescriptions are not released to NHS Spine until the post-date of the prescription is reached and prescriptions will not be visible on the EPS Tracker until it is released to the spine. Ensure you take this into account if you are having issues locating a prescription.
  - ❖ The EPS Phase 4 token will print for non-nominated prescriptions with the intended dispense date showing in the 'Date of issue' box. This will be given to the patient if present at the GP surgery or able to collect.

- **Repeat Dispensing**
  In response to COVID-19 work has also begun locally to implement Electronic Repeat Dispensing eRD on Wirral. You may see an increase in the number of eRD prescriptions. Again as part of this work nominations will be discussed with patients. New patients will not be initiated if they do not have a nomination.
  - ❖ For batch prescriptions already initiated, if there is no nomination set, then the eRD batch is sent to the Spine and an EPS phase 4 token is printed. This should be given to the patient so they can take the token to the pharmacy of their choice each time. N.B. Any new eRD prescriptions resulting from the medicines optimisation work will not be initiated unless a patient has a nomination.
  - ❖ Pharmacy should check dispense history using a combination of the EPS tracker, script date and issue number.

7.   Further resources

- Pharmacy Factsheet (consider sharing with GP/prescribers) :
- Pharmacy guidelines
- Phase 4 poster for office printing
- PSNC website
- Virtual Outcomes Training – EPS Phase 4 and eRD Web Course
  (Enter the pharmacies F Code, select 'Pharmacy Team Training' then select 'EPS Release 4 and eRD')