

Prif Swyddog Fferyllol Chief Pharmaceutical Officer



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To: All Community Pharmacies
Cc: Local Health Boards

By email

Our Ref: AE/COVID
21 March 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Updated information for Community Pharmacies

This morning (Saturday 21 March), the Minister for Health and Social Services announced increased flexibility for community pharmacies in Wales to reduce the number of hours they are open to people wishing to collect prescriptions for their regular repeat medicines. The specific nature of those additional flexibilities is set out in this letter which also provides further detail of our strategy for retaining safe, efficient and accessible pharmaceutical services for citizens in Wales. Finally, it describes how increased flexibility of pharmacy opening hours aligns to our wider approach.

As set out in my letter of 18 March, it is imperative that community pharmacies are supported to prioritise the allocation of staff and resources to those activities that are essential for maintaining people's health and wellbeing, and which only pharmacies can provide. Our four priorities for community pharmacy therefore, continue to be:

- To ensure patients continue to receive the medicines they need;
- To provide people with the advice and treatment they need to self-care for common minor ailments;
- To reduce pressure on other less appropriate NHS services; and
- To protect the health and wellbeing of community pharmacy teams.

Increasing flexibility for pharmacies to amend their opening hours

We have worked closely with Local Health Boards and Community Pharmacy Wales to agree increased flexibility for pharmacies to amend their opening hours. Specifically we are introducing the flexibility for every pharmacy in Wales, should it wish to, to:

- Open the pharmacy to the public one hour later each morning; and
- Close the pharmacy to the public one hour earlier each evening.

This flexibility is intended to allow pharmacy teams the time and space they require to plan and complete work each day. It is therefore important that pharmacies continue to operate during these hours even if they are not open to the public. Where a pharmacy wishes to adopt a reduction in hours it is imperative that they remain available to dispense and provide advice for urgent prescriptions and for particularly vulnerable groups. Local GP practices must be notified of changes before they are implemented.

In addition, pharmacies will be able to close for a period of up to two hours during the day, and we encourage up to one hour of this period to be used specifically for staff health and wellbeing. Again, pharmacies should remain available for urgent prescriptions and advice during any daytime closure. In all cases, each pharmacy is strongly advised to adopt a consistent daily routine rather than varying hours from day to day. Pharmacies should ensure customers are aware of changes by adding opening times to the Welsh Government show material distributed last week, by amending the pharmacy's website and where applicable, through social media.

How this fits with our wider approach

Our strategy for retaining safe, efficient and accessible pharmaceutical services is essentially a simple one. We have identified five key objectives and all our measures, including those announced by the Minister for Health and Social Services today, are aligned to one or more of those objectives. Our objectives are:

- 1) To ensure community pharmacies continue to be available to dispense and supply repeat and acute prescriptions, with if necessary a reduction in hours pharmacies are open to the public;
- 2) To support a move away from demand-led to more planned ways of working particularly in respect of repeat prescriptions;
- 3) To reduce footfall in community pharmacies both to support social-distancing and reduce pressure on pharmacy teams;
- 4) To support the public to self-care, through improved access to online information or through telephone advice and medicines from their community pharmacist; and
- 5) To protect the health and wellbeing of **all** pharmacy staff.

We are working urgently with partners across Government, Local Health Boards, Community Pharmacy Wales, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and with other stakeholders to develop a range of measures to support meeting these objectives. Further measures will be announced next week alongside additional public messaging.

I understand fully the unprecedented pressure being placed on you at this time and I continue to be inspired by the professionalism of pharmacy teams right across Wales. Please be assured we are working hard to ensure every community pharmacy receives the support it needs.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Evans BPharm(Hons) MPH FRPharmS
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer/Prif Swyddog Fferyllol
Welsh Government/Llywodraeth Cymru