MINI BULLETIN – 25 May 2023

Millions of patients will receive quicker, more convenient access to NHS care from their high street Pharmacy, thanks to a major expansion of services under a **radical**[**plan to improve access to Primary Care**](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.england.nhs.uk%2Fpublication%2Fdelivery-plan-for-recovering-access-to-primary-care%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7Ccb3efda6ad0546d514b308db5dc12ae3%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638206856459774678%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=cIWzqgLIhytFlyF52meWaNW9jZCzT9mVjui9os7z6b4%3D&reserved=0)**.**

For the first time ever, patients who need prescription medication will be able to get it directly from a Pharmacy, without a GP appointment, for seven common conditions - including earache, sore throat, or urinary tract infections - by next winter, thanks to Government investment of £645 million over two years to expand community Pharmacy services.

Published today by the NHS and the Government, the new blueprint sets out actions to improve access to care, better support patients to manage their own health, and to modernise General Practice for future generations.

Almost half a million women will no longer need to speak to a Practice Nurse or GP to access oral contraception and will instead be able to pop into their local Pharmacy for it.

Tens of thousands more people will be at lower risk of a heart attack or stroke, with the NHS more than doubling the number of people able to access blood pressure checks in their local Pharmacy – 2.5 million, up from 900,000 carried out last year.

The actions set out in the plan are expected to free up around 15 million GP appointments over the next two years for patients who need them most.

Ending the 8am ‘rush’ for appointments is a key part of the plan, with no patient having to wait on hold only to be told to call back another day for help.

This will be supported by investment in better phone technology for GP teams enabling them to manage multiple calls and redirect them to other specialists, such as Pharmacists and Mental Health Practitioners, if more suitable. During trials, this has increased patients’ ability to get through to their practice by almost a third.

Extra training will also be provided to staff answering calls at GP Practices, so that people who need to see their family doctor are prioritised while those who would be better seen by other staff such as Physiotherapists or Mental Health Specialists are able to bypass their GP.

In a significant new step, up to half a million people a year will be able to self-refer for key services, including physiotherapy, hearing tests, and podiatry, without seeing their GP first.

In the run up to the NHS’ 75th milestone birthday on 5 July, the new plan aims to support Primary Care services to continue to adapt and innovate to meet patients’ needs, with nine in ten people able to access their GP records, including test results, on the NHS App within the next year.

Demand for access is only going to increase with the number of people over 70, who are five times more likely to need a GP appointment than teenagers, growing by a third since 2010.

Following the [UK Government response](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdentistryandoralhealthupdate.cmail19.com%2Ft%2Fd-l-vlrtrly-tylrujjkld-b%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7Ccb3efda6ad0546d514b308db5dc12ae3%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638206856459774678%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VDGfReCBnYSwRjhjTmWmpqCplCzj7wrWuoz3S1jz6v8%3D&reserved=0) to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs Nitrous Oxide Updated Harms Assessment (27 March 2023), there has been some queries from **dental teams raising concerns about how this could change the use of nitrous oxide in dentistry.**

Conscious sedation is important to the provision of high-quality dental care for some patients. It has relevance where dental treatment may be more advanced or complex, for individuals who experience disproportionate anxiety in relation to dental care or in the case of special care and paediatric dentistry where patients cannot co-operate with routine care. Nitrous Oxide use is an important component to the provision of quality conscious sedation in primary, secondary and community care settings and in some respects it is.

In regulated dental services we would envisage that appropriate medical use of Nitrous oxide will continue as stated in the government response that “it is not our desire to inhibit its use for legitimate purposes”. Nevertheless, dental teams should remain mindful of the potential impact of the use of nitrous oxide on staff and the environment.