

To All: Community Pharmacies

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www.hscboard.hscni.net

29th March 2018

Dear Colleagues

PROVISION OF COMMUNITY PHARMACY SERVICES DURING RECENT ADVERSE WEATHER

I would like to acknowledge the efforts made by many Community Pharmacies to ensure adequate cover for patients in the difficult conditions presented by heavy snowfall which caused significant disruption to many parts of the province on 1st and 2nd March.

You will be aware of my communication to all community pharmacies following Storm Ophelia which also caused significant disruption to community pharmacy services.

The purpose of this letter is to remind pharmacy contractors of the requirements under Terms of Service and the need to have robust business continuity arrangements in place.

TERMS OF SERVICE

Community pharmacy contractors are required, under Terms of Service¹, to provide pharmaceutical services for all of the pharmacy's contracted hours. Clause 4 (12) in Schedule 2 Part II makes the following provision for when the chemist is prevented from complying with these obligations:

“Where a chemist is prevented by illness or other reasonable cause from complying with his obligation under this paragraph, he shall, where practicable, make arrangements with one or more chemists whose premises are situated in the neighbourhood for the provision of pharmaceutical services during that time”

¹ http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Pharm_Regs_1997.pdf

A number of Community Pharmacies contacted the Board to ask if they could close early. As outlined above, the decision to close a pharmacy or remain open cannot be taken by the Board, and must be decided by the Pharmacy Contractor, taking account of the situation that presents.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY ARRANGEMENTS

It is advised that pharmacies have up-to-date arrangements for business continuity in the event of unforeseen service pressures. Business continuity planning enables pharmacies to plan how to function if an emergency actually occurs such as we have seen over recent months.

In those instances where the pharmacy decides to close, the logistics and arrangements of this cover is up to each individual pharmacy and will depend on the situation, particularly in relation to services being provided by local GP practices.

ACTION REQUIRED

In a situation where the contractor has determined that the pharmacy cannot provide the normal pharmacy service, they must:

- notify the local HSCB office
- advise as to the contingency arrangements which have been put in place to ensure that patients' needs can be met

Yours sincerely



Joe Brogan
Assistant Director of Integrated Care
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management