

Updated guidance for registered pharmacies providing pharmacy services at a distance, including on the internet

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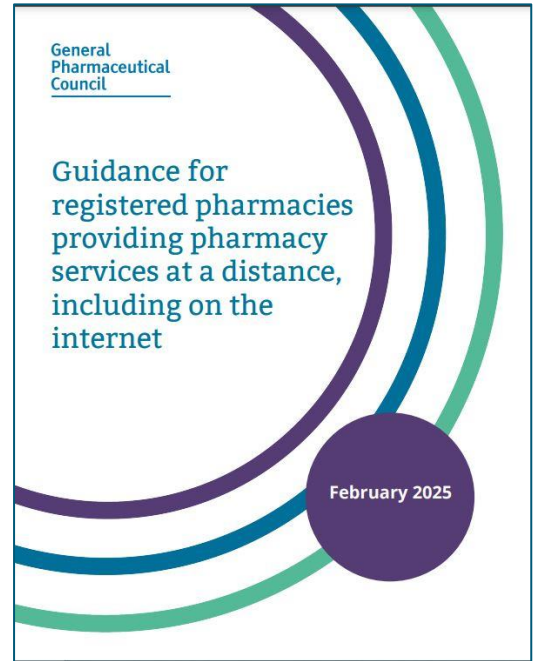
Chief Pharmacy Officer



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Updated guidance

We have published updated guidance that all online pharmacies are expected to follow, in response to concerns identified relating to unsafe prescribing and supply of medicines online.



Consultation with the person and verifying information before prescribing medicines

- There **should always be a means to allow two-way communication** between the person and the prescriber for all online prescribing.
- For higher-risk medicines, the prescriber **should not base prescribing decisions** on the information provided in a questionnaire alone. The prescriber is expected to **independently verify** the information the person provides.

Extra safeguards for some medicines

- Before providing medicines for weight-management, the prescriber **should independently verify** the person's weight, height and/or body mass index, to support safe decision making.
- **Further safeguards** have been included in the guidance for medicines liable to misuse, and those for long-term conditions or that require ongoing monitoring or management.

Other key changes to the guidance include:

- Emphasising that online pharmacies need to follow the law and guidance on the advertising and promotion of medicines
- Further safeguards when prescribing for patients without a regular prescriber such as a GP
- Clarifying the responsibilities of an online pharmacy when it is working with a third-party prescribing service
- Being able to select a preferred prescription medicine before a consultation

Implementation



- Pharmacy owners and Superintendent Pharmacists are expected to review the updated guidance and make any changes needed at the earliest opportunity.
- GPhC inspectors will continue to inspect online pharmacies and will be looking for evidence that pharmacies are meeting our standards.
- Not taking the appropriate steps to meet our standards could result in the GPhC taking enforcement action.

Inappropriate advertising and promotion of prescription-only medicines



- The GPhC is working closely with both the MHRA and the ASA/CAP to jointly tackle inappropriate advertising and promotion of medicines by some online pharmacies.
- This includes referring concerns onto the MHRA and the ASA/CAP where appropriate, and considering what action we should all take in response.