**COVID-19 PLANNING**

**INFORMATION FOR PHARMACIES (23rd March 2020)**

Dear Colleague,

We have considered carefully how to continue to best support people on opiate substitution therapy (OST) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our plan is based on the principle that it is always safer for opioid dependent people to have OST available to take home, rather than be off OST and feel compelled to use street opioids. However, this needs to be tempered with supporting our vulnerable clients to practice social distancing in order to safeguard their own health. Additionally, we need to support our community pharmacy colleagues to be able to continue to provide access to medicines for the whole community that they serve.

**Prescriptions**

We have made the decision to move the majority of clients to take home OST with clients collecting as infrequently as possible. This may be weekly/two weekly or in some cases longer. This will be done based on individual client risk assessment.

Our services will be changing prescriptions over the next few days. This may mean that a client's prescription is stopped mid way and a new prescription issued. Our staff will ensure robust communication with pharmacy teams to reduce the risk of double dosing.

**Supervised Consumption:**

We intend to move away from supervised consumption as far as possible, however a minority of clients will need to remain on this due to their individual risks and we would ask you to support us in this.

Although where indicated on a prescription supervised consumption should be observed under normal circumstances, it is not a legal requirement. If you intend to relax supervision please ensure you inform the prescriber with your rationale. Please be mindful that supervision is in place to protect the client in many ways and reduce diversion. If you can find a more flexible way to achieve this without stopping supervision entirely that would be our preference, but we are mindful of current challenges. **If you do not supervise clients when the prescription states, you do not need to get the prescription amended.**

**Client Self-Isolation:**

If a client reports they are too ill to come in, or are self-isolating, whether on supervised consumption or not, we would like you to observe the following protocol:

1. The pharmacist must take reasonable steps to assure themselves that they are speaking to the client.
2. Contact the service by phone and report that the client is ill and has made this request.
3. Allow for a specified representative to collect once the service has been informed. This will not require a new prescription. Pickup days must remain the same unless notified otherwise by the prescriber.
4. Clients should nominate an individual and provide a letter authorising the individual to collect on their behalf signed and dated for each collection.
5. The representative collecting should present with some form of ID and the letter of authorisation from the client.
6. The letter of authorisation should be maintained by the pharmacy as per good practice.
7. If you have any concerns over specific clients or that medication may be being diverted, inform the service ASAP by phone.

Should the situation deteriorate we will review the intervals between pickups. This will be based on risk assessment and therefore will be on a case by case basis.

**Out of Hours Requests:**

Should a client inform they are self-isolating then the pharmacist will need to use their professional discretion regarding following the above process. The pharmacy will then inform the prescriber/service when they next open that this occurred over the weekend/closed period.

**If your pharmacy needs to close:**

Please contact the service using the number printed on the bottom of the prescription.

State the reason for your closure, and how long you anticipate being closed for. Let us know who is left to collect medication today, and who needs alternative prescriptions for the duration of the closure.

Many thanks for your support with this matter and we will be in touch regarding updates to this protocol as they are available.

Kind regards

We Are With You Liverpool