

Meningitis B vaccination service: a strong start in Gloucestershire

Since launching earlier this summer, the community pharmacy Meningitis B (Men B) vaccination service has got off to an excellent start across Gloucestershire — and it's all down to the effort our contractors have put in.

****The numbers so far:****

****99 pharmacies registered**** for the Men B service in Gloucestershire as of 4 August 2026 — around one in eight of all Men B registrations across the South West.

****1,675 Men B vaccinations delivered**** by Gloucestershire pharmacies between 20 July and 4 August 2026, contributing to a South West total of 12,373 in the same period.



That puts Gloucestershire firmly in the middle of the pack among the South West ICBs for activity so far — a strong showing for a service that's only just getting going, and one that reflects real commitment from teams who are already busy delivering Pharmacy First, preparing for flu and Covid vaccinations, and everything else that keeps a pharmacy running.

A genuine thank you to every pharmacy and every team member who has registered patients, fitted in appointments, and made this service work in its first few weeks. Early uptake like this doesn't happen by accident — it's the result of contractors making time to promote the service, talk to patients, and get people booked in, often at short notice and alongside everything else on your plate.

We'll continue to share updates on Men B activity as the service beds in. If you haven't yet signed up to deliver the service, haven't opened up appointment slots or want tips on promoting it to patients, get in touch with the CPG team

*****news in brief***news in brief***news in brief*****

Yvette Cooper has been appointed Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP, Karin Smyth MP and Alison McGovern MP have been announced as Ministers of State in the Department, but their briefs have yet to be confirmed



Sector leaders criticised the government following announcements providing business rate reliefs to pubs and music venues while completely omitting struggling community pharmacies.

The results of the Common Registration Assessment for trainee pharmacists, held jointly by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland have been published. A total of 3,326 candidates sat the assessment on 16 June 2026, with 2,748 candidates passing the assessment: an overall pass rate of 83%

Medicines shortages remain high on the agenda for CPE and are causing increasing problems for community pharmacies, with the 2026 pharmacy pressures survey showing that 86% of pharmacies are spending more time sourcing medicines than they did a year ago, with 72% of pharmacy team members reporting that patients are affected by medicines shortages on a daily basis.

Directory of Services

The Directory of Services (DoS) is a secure NHS England database that provides real-time service information to NHS 111 call handlers and other healthcare professionals. It is vital for the information to be kept updated in order for Pharmacies to receive referrals. Pharmacy owners must keep their DoS profile accurate and complete using the [NHS Profile Manager](#).

Email : dosteam.southwest@nhs.net

Tel : 01452 943316 (24/7 on call number)

Smartcards

Pharmacy teams use NHS Smartcards for NHS IT such as the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) and Summary Care Record (SCR).

Each community pharmacy team member should have their own Smartcard, Smartcards should not be shared with other team members.

[Smartcard Factsheet CPE](#)

Gloucestershire Smartcard Office :

Email: scwcsu.smartcards@nhs.net

Tel: 0300 5610429

NHSmail

If you need to obtain a shared NHSmail mailbox for your pharmacy, you can request this via the community pharmacy [NHSmail registration portal](#).

Working through this process will include the creation of up to three personal NHSmail accounts which will be used to access the shared mailbox.

The process is explained in [How to complete the NHSmail registration process](#).

Once you have completed your registration using the portal, you will be sent login details for the personal accounts so that you can activate them and then log into your shared mailbox. If you are having difficulties with activating your account, raise a [technical query with the NAS](#) and they will support you through the process.

GP Connect

GP Connect: Update Record empowers community pharmacy professionals to share consultation summaries seamlessly and securely from their pharmacy IT system to the GP practice system. These summaries include essential details such as medications supplied.

Services scope: GP Connect: Update Record initially supports community pharmacies in sharing information with GP practices for consultations under the :

- ✦ Pharmacy First service (minor illness and clinical pathways),
- ✦ Hypertension Case Finding, and Pharmacy Contraception Service.

Checklist's for your Pharmacy :

[GP-Connect-Implementation-Checklist-for-Community-Pharmacies.docx](#)

[Community-Pharmacy-Smartcard-Access-audit-template.pdf](#)



HAVE YOU STARTED YOUR LOCAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN???

The first Local Health Campaign – 'Keep Antibiotics Working' runs from 3rd to 28th August 2026.

[Campaign resources](#)

[Declaration Form](#)

Why Asking About Ethnicity Matters in NHS Consultations

Many pharmacy teams find asking patients about their ethnicity uncomfortable, but it is an important part of NHS consultations and plays a key role in improving patient care.

Recording ethnicity is not about labelling patients or making assumptions. It helps the NHS understand who is accessing services, identify health inequalities, and ensure support reaches all communities fairly. This information is particularly important because some health conditions affect certain ethnic groups differently. For example, South Asian communities have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, while Black African and Black Caribbean communities are more likely to experience high blood pressure and stroke.

Best Practice: Ask Everyone

The simplest approach is to make ethnicity a routine part of every consultation:

"As part of our NHS consultation, we ask all patients a few routine questions, including their ethnicity."

The key message is **"We ask everyone."** This helps patients feel comfortable and avoids anyone feeling singled out.

If Patients Ask Why

A simple explanation is usually enough:

"Recording ethnicity helps the NHS understand who is accessing services, identify health inequalities, and make sure healthcare support reaches everyone fairly."

If a patient prefers not to answer, respect their decision and record "prefer not to say." Their care will not be affected.

Remember

- ◇ Ask every eligible patient consistently
- ◇ Make it part of your normal consultation
- ◇ Be confident and matter-of-fact
- ◇ Explain the reason if asked
- ◇ Respect a patient's choice not to answer
- Don't guess a patient's ethnicity
- Don't make assumptions based on appearance, accent, or name
- Don't only ask certain groups of patients

By asking this question consistently, community pharmacy can help tackle health inequalities, improve service planning, and demonstrate equitable access to NHS services for all communities.

Reminder: Sign up to provide Gloucestershire local
PGD services as part of Pharmacy First

Community pharmacies across Gloucestershire are reminded to sign up to deliver the new local minor ailment PGDs:

- Conjunctivitis
- Oral candidiasis
- Otitis Externa
- Mild skin conditions

These services play a vital role in supporting patients with timely access to advice and treatment, helping to ease pressure on General Practices and other parts of the NHS.

Contractors wishing to provide the service must:

1. Review the current service specification and PGD documentation
2. Sign and return the agreement to glicb.pod@nhs.net
3. Confirm staff training and competency requirements are up to date.

If your pharmacy has not yet registered and you want to find out more please contact

Sam.bradshaw@cpglos.uk for more information.

Local PGD's Service

REMINDER.....

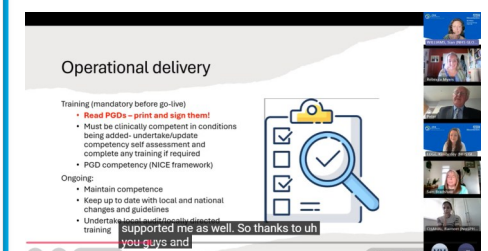
When completing the PharmOutcomes Forms for Local PGD's Service please ensure that you are completing all the boxes!

The information you provide enables the ICB to evaluate the service – don't skip the tick boxes – try to obtain all the correct information.

GOOD DATA HELPS TO TARGET FUTURE SERVICES

Missed our webinar about the new locally commissioned PGD service?

Watch it on-demand on our You tube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@CommunityPharmacyGloucestershire>



Pharmacy Christmas & New Year Opening Hours: Important Notice for Contractors

As we look ahead to the festive period, it's time for pharmacy teams to start planning their Christmas and New Year opening hours. This year, Boxing Day falls on a Saturday, which means the official Bank Holiday will be observed on Monday 28 December.

This shift has important implications for contractors who are considering closing on Saturday 26 December (Boxing Day).

Core Hours: If Boxing Day forms part of your core contractual hours, you must apply for a temporary suspension. This application needs to be submitted at least three months in advance to ensure compliance and allow NHS England sufficient time to review and approve the request.

Supplementary Hours: If the hours you wish to close are supplementary, you must provide formal notice of your intention to close. Again, this must be done no later than three months before the date.

Failing to meet these deadlines may result in your pharmacy being required to open, even if you had planned otherwise!

Flu vaccination services: what's changing this winter

With the 2026/27 season fast approaching, there are some important changes to both the adult and childhood flu vaccination services that contractors need to know about.

Childhood flu service significantly expanded

The pilot childhood flu service for 2–3 year olds — first trialled last season — has been extended for 2026/27, with an increased fee. Following successful lobbying, the service has also been expanded to cover two new groups:

- Clinically at-risk children aged 2 up to 18 years
- Catch-up vaccinations for school-aged children (Reception to Year 11)

This is a much bigger opportunity than last year's pilot, which was limited to 2–3 year olds only. NHS England will also fund the cost of the Point of Care System for the season, so there's no new IT outlay to provide the service.

Seasonal vaccination service (COVID-19 and adult flu)

From April 2026, the previously separate COVID-19 and adult flu services were combined into a single Seasonal Vaccination Service. Pharmacies can choose to offer COVID-19 and flu together, or flu only. Key dates for this winter:

- **1 September 2026** – pregnant women become eligible for flu and COVID vaccination
- **1 October 2026** – vaccination can commence for other adult cohorts, 2-and 3-year olds, 2-18 year olds in clinical or other risk groups and 16-17 year old experiencing homelessness
- **1 December 2026**– catch-up service for all other school aged children (those not in any risk group) can begin
- **31 March 2027** – service closes

Eligible cohorts are unchanged from last season, but there are changes to the recommended vaccines and vaccine licensing to be aware of — check the annual flu letter for details.

Earlier National Booking Service opening

Following pressure from Community Pharmacy England, the National Booking Service (NBS) opens earlier this year — **17 August 2026** — giving pharmacies a longer run-up to promote appointments before the season starts.

New legal mechanisms: PGDs and VGDs

Alongside the usual Patient Group Direction (PGD), a new Vaccine Group Direction (VGD) has been introduced this season to replace the national protocol which has been removed from legislation. Similar to the national protocol a VGD allows certain steps- preparation, administration and record-keeping — to be delegated to trained, non-registered staff, giving pharmacies more flexibility in how they staff clinics. The choice of PGD or VGD is up to each pharmacy owner.

New recording requirement from September

From **1 September 2026**, all NHS vaccinations must be recorded via the Record a Vaccination Service (RAVS), either directly or through an approved pharmacy IT system if your IT provider offers this

Full details on both services, including service specifications, PGDs/VGDs and sign-up deadlines, are available on the Community Pharmacy England website. <https://cpe.org.uk/national-pharmacy-services/advanced-services/>

Want to find out more about your Local Pharmaceutical Committee or get more involved?

Need advice or support from an LPC member or officer?

Want to give feedback about us or other local services?

Contact us

Sam.bradshaw@cpglos.uk or Rebecca.myers@cpglos.uk

Andrew Lane- Chair
Rebecca Myers- Chief Officer
Sam Bradshaw- Support Officer
www.gloucestershire.communitypharmacy.org.uk

