

14/11/2025

Communication sent to:**All Black Country Pharmacies**

Dear Pharmacy Team,

Patient Led Ordering (PLO)

What Pharmacy Teams need to know



This letter is being sent jointly from Community Pharmacy Black Country and Black Country ICB to inform you of the intention to move to Patient Led Ordering (PLO) for repeat prescriptions. The planned go-live date is 01/03/2026.

This change aims to empower patients to take a more active role in managing their repeat prescriptions while helping to reduce medicine waste and improve safety. We recognise that this will be a shift for some patients, and we want to collaborate with you to ensure a smooth transition.

We value your insight in identifying patients who may require exemptions from using the NHS App, such as those receiving medicines via medicine compliance aids (MCA) or those who may struggle to manage their prescriptions independently. Working together, we can ensure these patients continue to receive the support they need. For more information, please refer to the PLO policy [Patient-led-ordering policy Vs 1.0.pdf](#).

Background information

The Patient-Led Ordering (PLO) initiative is a Black Country wide programme to implement the use of the NHS App for patients to order their repeat prescriptions.

Use of the NHS App empowers patients to take control of their medication management while enhancing safety, reducing waste, and optimising practice and pharmacy workloads, by moving the responsibility for ordering from pharmacies to patients.

Additionally, it fosters improved collaboration across healthcare settings. With a target of 179,550 NHS App repeat prescription orders by March 2026, this initiative aligns with national goals to improve healthcare efficiency, patient experience, and environmental sustainability. PLO is a key step toward a modernised, patient-centred prescription management system that accommodates all patient needs.

Aims:



- **Patient Empowerment & Control:** Encourage patients to actively manage their repeat prescriptions via digital tools like the NHS App
- **Promoting self-care and improving access:** Supporting patients to manage their own health
- **Safety Enhancements:** reducing issues and errors associated with auto-reordering of discontinued medications
- **Waste Reduction:** Minimise unnecessary medication ordering, reducing stockpiling and the environmental impact of medicine waste
- **Efficiency Gains:** save time on prescription management and reduce the number of patient queries

Patient Exemptions:



Recognising that PLO is not suitable for all patients; exemptions are available for:

- **Patients with Digital Literacy Issues:** Alternative methods will remain available for those unable to use digital platforms
- **Language Barriers:** Support will be provided for patients who may struggle due to English being their second language
- **Use of Medication Trays:** Patients requiring dosette or medication trays for complex regimens
- **Other Vulnerable Groups:** Pharmacies and GP practices will collaborate to identify individuals with mobility challenges, cognitive impairments, or other vulnerabilities who may continue to benefit from pharmacy-led ordering

Benefits to Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Benefits
Patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Greater convenience and control by ordering through the NHS App at any time■ Improved safety by reducing issues and incidents and ensuring access to the most up-to-date medications■ Tailored support for those unable to order independently, ensuring no one is left behind
Pharmacy Teams & General Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Reduced time spent managing repeat prescriptions and addressing queries about missing or incorrect■ Time savings by reducing phone-based queries■ Streamlining repeat prescription approval processes■ Improved focus on patient care, freeing up time and resources for other priorities

Implementation Highlights



- **Standardised Resources:** A comprehensive toolkit, including an SOP, planner, and Equality Impact Assessment, supports general practices in deploying PLO safely and effectively
- **Collaboration:** Strong partnership between GP practices, pharmacies, and digital inclusion networks ensures all patients, particularly vulnerable groups, receive tailored support
- **Training & Support:** Community pharmacies and GP practices receive guidance to assist patients in adopting digital tools like the NHS App

Next Steps:

Please can you work through the checklist in this letter and start to take the actions suggested? You must collaborate with your GP practice to ensure a smooth transition over to Patient Led Ordering (PLO). Feedback from other ICBs that have gone live with this, who are already live, is that the first 4-6 weeks involve some additional workload, but once patients get used to the new way of ordering their prescriptions electronically, the workload reduces for both GP practices and community pharmacists.

Together, we will ensure patients receive appropriate support and communication regarding the changes

If you have any questions or would like to discuss how we can best support patients together, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We appreciate your collaboration in delivering the best care for our patients.

Potential Exemptions from Patient-Led Ordering of Medicines

Certain patient groups should be considered for exemption from patient-led ordering of medicines to ensure patient safety, continuity of care, and appropriate medication management. GP practices and pharmacies should work together to identify and support these patients.

Patients Receiving Medicine Compliance Aids (MCA)

This is an interim measure to allow a review of MCA patients.

At this time, all patients using MCA require pharmacy-led ordering to ensure sufficient preparation time and to prevent delays and medication errors. Pharmacies must conduct an equality assessment (if this has not already been completed) to confirm that MCA is necessary based on clinical need rather than convenience. Alternative

options, such as MAR charts, may be equally effective for some patients. [Black Country ICB 7-day and MDS Prescribing policy - version 6.1.pdf](#)

During this review period, patients assessed as not requiring MCA should be supported to receive medicines in original packs with appropriate adjustments.

Other Patient Groups Potentially Requiring Alternative Ordering Methods

Some patients may need alternative support for ordering medications, particularly if they do not have family or carer assistance.

These include:

- ❖ **Vulnerable Patients:** Those with learning disabilities, severe mental health conditions, dementia, or cognitive impairments who may struggle with digital ordering systems
- ❖ **Patients with Physical Disabilities:** Individuals with conditions such as severe arthritis or neurological disorders that impact dexterity and digital access
- ❖ **Patients with Digital or Language Barriers:** Those with low digital literacy, lack of internet access, or language barriers preventing effective use of online systems
- ❖ **Patients at Risk of Medication Misuse:** Individuals with substance misuse issues or erratic lifestyles who require closer monitoring of prescriptions

All patients should be assessed individually to determine the most suitable ordering method. Where exemptions apply, clear communication between GP practices and pharmacies is essential to ensure continuity of care. Contingency plans should also be in place for safeguarding concerns or unexpected changes in patient circumstances.

Please note: some patients in the above groups may still wish to manage their own prescription ordering and should be supported to do so where possible.

Patient-Led Ordering (PLO) Implementation Checklist for Community Pharmacy Teams

Pharmacy name:

Name of person completing:

List of local GP practices and their PLO go-live date:

Activity	By whom?	By when?	Date completed
Understand the PLO Model	Responsible pharmacist/ Pharmacy manager	Before practices implement PLO on 01/03/2026	
Read and understand the policy on PLO.			
Read and understand the communication pack on PLO.			
Identify Patients Who May Need Exemption Review your patient list for individuals who may struggle with patient-led ordering, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients on Medicine Compliance Aids (MCA) • Patients with cognitive impairments or learning disabilities • Patients lacking digital access or confidence (digitally excluded) • Patients who do not speak English 			
Collaborate with GP Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and share your exemption list with your practice(s) • Review and finalise the exemption list collaboratively 			

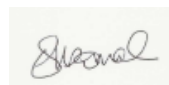
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on who will manage exemptions and communications 			
<p>Update Internal Pharmacy Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust your process for repeat prescription requests • Train all team members on the NHS App • Encourage patients to order via the NHS App • Clearly flag exempt patients in the PMR to avoid confusion 			
<p>Inform and Support Patients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signpost patients to help on how to download and use the NHS App if needed NHS App and your NHS account - NHS • Reassure exempt patients that their prescription ordering process will remain unchanged 			
<p>Monitor and Provide Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor patient queries and challenges • Regularly review and update your exemption list as appropriate • Share feedback with the GP practice or Community Pharmacy Lead Officer (CPLO)/ Community Pharmacy Black Country to support ongoing improvement – use the escalation process where appropriate 			

If you have any queries, please contact the Black Country ICB digital team help desk at bcicb.digitalfirstteam@nhs.net

Sent on behalf of:



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