

## **Adults, Health and Housing OSC Commission**

### **Pharmacy First Scheme**

**January 2011**

#### **Background**

NHS Derby City is facing a significant financial challenge and has examined all aspects of expenditure to ensure investments provide value for money as to identify potential areas for decommissioning that will release resources to enable a balanced financial position.

Pharmacy First is a community pharmacy minor ailments scheme through which people entitled to free prescriptions can obtain medicines for minor ailments directly from the pharmacy, without the need to obtain a prescription from their GP practice. These minor ailments include coughs and colds, headlice, thrush and analgesia especially children (Paracetamol suspension)

The intention of the scheme at its outset was to enable practices to divert significant amounts of appointment related activity for free prescriptions to community pharmacies, therefore freeing up GP time in order to meet access targets and enable improved access to patients with more clinical need, especially in more deprived areas. The requirement to support practices to achieve this target no longer exists, following the removal of the 24/48 hour target for primary care. Additionally the PCT has invested significantly in additional capacity in primary care with 100% of GP practices offering extended opening times of which five have significantly extended opening times.

Pharmacy First is an enhanced service. Within the existing pharmacy contractual framework, pharmacies are required to provide advice on self care and GP practices are contractually required to deliver immediate and necessary care for their registered patients.

The use, and therefore cost of the scheme, has increased by 34% over the previous two years and is expected to cost in excess of £132,000 in 2010/2011. The majority of this is the

consultation fee (75%), as opposed to the medication cost (25%) which is all low cost medicines available over the counter.

### **Decision to decommission Pharmacy First**

In September 2010, NHS Derby City's Strategic Health Investment Committee took a decision to decommission the Pharmacy First Service

It is important to note that the existing contractual arrangements ensure that:

- All the medications available under Pharmacy First continue to be available to purchase over the counter at all Community Pharmacists and other retailers
- Community Pharmacists continue to provide self care advice for minor ailments (an essential service covered by the contractual framework) .
- Patients are able to access GPs for prescriptions which will facilitate obtaining medication without charge if patients are exempt.

The decommissioning of Pharmacy First will not prevent any treatment for minor ailments to patients, but will mean a change to how a cohort of patients access treatment.

### **Decommissioning Process**

The Pharmacy First scheme will continue until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

An Equality Impact Risk Assessment (EIRA) is currently being completed, which will identify the groups of people and diversity strands likely to be affected. As part of the EIRA process consultation with communities identified as being affected will be undertaken. This will allow us to identify how best to minimise any risks to these communities, to ensure they can continue to access the health services currently provided by Pharmacy First.

A programme of engagement will be undertaken throughout January and February in the form of an information campaign, targeting registered users of the scheme, along with general public awareness. Derby LINK will also be involved and the views of wider stakeholders will be sought regarding how this change can be managed.