

Caring for Care Homes

Newsletter

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For Health and Social Care Professionals

The Importance of having an NHSmail Address

Having an NHSmail address allows care homes to work with other health and social care providers in a secure manner, making care home staff's working practices more straightforward for the benefit of both the staff and your residents.

NHS Devon continue to work in collaboration with Devon County Council and other local authorities to roll out the use of NHSmail with all health and social care providers. The NHSmail service is the national collaboration platform for health and social care, and is the most secure way that information can be transferred between departments, such as:



- GPs
- Care Homes
- Acute Services
- Domiciliary Care Providers
- Community Hospitals
- Community Pharmacists
- Many others

Benefits of your staff having access to a shared NHSmail account for your home include:

- Safe and secure communication methods with primary care (GP surgeries) and secondary care (hospital) services - sharing patient identifiable information outside of NHSmail is not secure and could lead to an information governance breach
- Timely sharing of information
- Access in the future to the Devon and Cornwall shared care record
- Access to proxy ordering, where the care home can view the patient's online prescription ordering system via their GP practice (with consent).

How can you access the NHSmail service? There are 3 steps to obtaining an NHSmail address which is accessed via a shared mailbox:

- Locate your [Organisation Data Service \(ODS\) number](#)
- Register and meet the standards required on the [Data Security and Protection Toolkit \(DSPT\)](#): Devon Care Home Collaborative (DCHC) are supporting all social care organisations to complete the DSPT with training events, if you are interested in attending an event please email sara.small@devoncarehomes.org. This helpful [video](#) explains more.
- Register on the [NHSmail Portal](#).

In order to use NHSmail, all users must adhere and agree to abide by the rules set out in the NHSmail Acceptable Use Policy and remember to set security questions. Here is a [video](#) of the whole process.

This year, NHS Devon will be getting in touch to support all providers to sign up. In the meantime, there is a dedicated resource to support providers to achieve the requirements and gain access to NHSmail. Please contact: d-icb.communityservicescommissioning@nhs.net and info@devoncarehomes.org.

If your care home has already got an NHSmail address set-up then please use it whenever possible, especially when contacting GP practices, community pharmacies, adult social care at your local authority or NHS Devon. In this way, staff members who have an NHSmail address will become experienced with using this service. It is worth noting that NHSmail accounts which are not used for 30 consecutive days are now marked inactive, and inactive accounts which are not activated within the following 30 days are deleted.

The Medicines Supply Tool

The Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) [medicines supply tool](#) provides up-to-date information about medicine supply issues. You can use it to search for information on medicine supply issues by drug class, issue severity, or by new, ongoing or resolved issues. You can also check when a medicine is expected to be back in stock. It only takes a few seconds to [register](#) with your NHSmail address.



Incident learning: emergency admission due to delayed antiepileptic

Recently an incident occurred where a resident in a care home did not receive their medication for several days, which led to an emergency admittance to hospital.

The medication for epilepsy, Levetiracetam, was added to the resident's medication list mid-month following a seizure. The care home then ordered the medication as part of the monthly cycle but was declined by the practice, due to the request being made too early. On noticing the missing medication as part of the monthly booking-in process, the care home requested an emergency prescription, at this point the resident still had some remaining supply. After ongoing communication with the practice over a few days, a prescription was issued.

The prescription was sent through to the regular pharmacy, but the pharmacy had mistakenly believed that it was for the next months' cycle, so did not dispense it. This misunderstanding at the pharmacy resulted in a further delay in supply to the care home. Before the medication arrived at the care home the resident unfortunately suffered a seizure and was admitted to hospital having missed 5 doses of their antiepileptic.

In this case, there were multiple factors that led to the delayed medication and subsequent missed doses of antiepileptic. These incidents can provide valuable learning to prevent similar future events:

- Ensure swift and clear communication with the medical practice and pharmacy when chasing up missing medication. Any phone conversations can be followed up by an email. Communication forms that can be used when contacting the GP practice by email are available [here](#). Always include as much detail as possible.
- If there are shift changes, ensure that any medication issue is communicated with the next staff member who can follow it up.
- Keep a clear audit trail of any correspondence relating to the medication issue.
- Maintain accurate medication stock records for each resident.
- Timely communication with the regular pharmacy is advisable to ensure consistency and supply of MAR charts. However, in emergencies, if the regular pharmacy cannot supply the medication in time, consider arranging for the prescription to be sent to an alternative pharmacy, perhaps one that is more local and can be collected the same day.
- Escalate medication issues to ensure that the management and the next of kin (if appropriate) are advised and can act accordingly.
- Put a detailed policy in place to manage medication incidences and ensure it is read and understood by all staff managing medicines.
- Record any incidents accurately and in a timely manner. Please refer to our [Guidance Sheet: 00 How to record and review a significant incident and form](#).

A small reminder



August (28th) bank holiday is coming soon.

Remember to order your monthly repeat prescriptions in good time to make sure the home has sufficient stock. Information on which community pharmacies are open during this period can be found [here](#).

The Caring for Care Homes Team have reviewed the following guidance sheets, which are available on the NHS Devon website:

- **04** Anticoagulants **v6_2022**
- **6b** Homemade fortified drinks and desserts **v2_2023**
- **11** Topical medicines and application record sheet **v8_2023**
- **13** Insulin **v7_2023**
- **21** Homely Remedies Guidance Sheet and Template **v5_2022**
- **22** Using the Medication Administration Record (MAR) effectively **v5_2022**
- **23** Covert Administration **v5_2022**
- **25** Parkinson's **v5_2023**
- **30** Self-care medicines: OTC and Pharmacy Only medication in care homes **v3_2023**
- **Red** Communication of Change to Medication Form: Care Home to GP **v6_2023**
- **Blue** Communication of Change to Medication Form: GP to Care Home **v5_2023**