

INDEPENDENT PRESCRIBING IN COMMUNITY PHARMACY

What Pharmacy Owners Need to Know Before Getting Started

Central East CPLs

Contractor Readiness Guide 2026/27

Key Message

Independent prescribing presents a significant opportunity for community pharmacy to expand clinical services, improve patient access and develop new professional roles. However, becoming prescribing-ready requires planning, investment and ongoing governance arrangements. This guide is designed to help pharmacy owners understand the opportunities, requirements, costs and risks before deciding whether to proceed.

This guide is designed to help you:

- Assess whether becoming a prescribing pharmacy is right for your organisation
- Understand the workforce, governance and digital requirements needed before applying
- Identify the actions required to become an approved prescribing pharmacy
- Understand the ongoing responsibilities associated with delivering prescribing services
- Access the key resources, guidance and supporting documentation needed to inform decision-making

Why does this matter?

Independent prescribing represents a significant expansion in the role of community pharmacy. Being an independent prescriber does not automatically permit delivery of NHS Community Pharmacy Prescribing services. Pharmacy owners must successfully complete local ICB assurance and national onboarding processes before service commencement

Approved prescribing pharmacies will be able to deliver new NHS clinical services, improve patient access to treatment, reduce unnecessary referrals back to general practice and support the development of neighbourhood health services.

From 2026/27, approved prescribing pharmacies will be able to deliver prescribing consultations for:

-  Migraine
-  Acute Otitis Externa
-  Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis
-  Mild to Moderate Acne
-  Skin & Soft Tissue Infections / Scabies
-  Undertaking prescription management interventions
-  Prescribing elements of Pharmacy First and the Pharmacy Contraception Service

These pathways can only be delivered by approved pharmacist prescribers working within an approved prescribing pharmacy.

Before you Decide

Independent prescribing is not simply a new clinical service. It introduces additional workforce, governance, digital and assurance requirements that must be maintained on an ongoing basis.

Workforce, Competence and Clinical Supervision

Having a pharmacist independent prescriber is only the starting point.

Pharmacy owners must ensure that prescribing pharmacists:

- ✓ Hold a GPhC Independent Prescriber annotation
- ✓ Work within a clearly defined scope of practice
- ✓ Have the knowledge, skills and competence required for the conditions they assess and prescribe for
- ✓ Maintain appropriate indemnity cover and continuing professional development
- ✓ Have access to appropriate clinical supervision, peer support and regular appraisal.

Good prescribing practice should be supported by:

-  A named clinical supervisor
-  Access to a peer support network
-  A professional portfolio
-  Ongoing review of competence and scope of practice
-  Regular supervision and development discussions

Important

Independent prescribers must only prescribe within their competence and scope of practice. There are currently no PGDs planned for the new prescribing-only pathways. In addition, pharmacist prescribers cannot rely on national PGDs for the same clinical pathways once acting in their prescribing role. Pharmacy owners should therefore ensure that prescribers have the competence, confidence and support arrangements necessary to deliver the service safely.

Essential Reading Before Applying

The following documents should be reviewed by pharmacy owners, superintendent pharmacists and pharmacist prescribers before deciding whether to become a prescribing pharmacy.

Read?	Date Reviewed	Document	Link	Why it Matters
☐		Community Pharmacy England – Prescribing within the CPCF	CPE Prescribing within the CPCF	Start here. Provides the best overview of contractor requirements, prerequisites, expected preparation work and links to all supporting resources.
☐		NHS Community Pharmacy Prescribing Specification	NHS Community Pharmacy Prescribing	Core requirements for NHS prescribing pharmacies. Covers workforce, governance, digital requirements, prescribing activity and ongoing obligations.
☐		Pharmacy First Service Specification*	NHS Pharmacy First Service	Required if the pharmacy intends to provide Pharmacy First prescribing consultations.
☐		Pharmacy Contraception Service Specification*	NHS Pharmacy Contraception Service	Required if the pharmacy intends to provide contraception prescribing consultations.
☐		Professional Assurance Framework for Delivering NHS Community Pharmacy Clinical Services	Professional Assurance Framework	Sets out expectations regarding competence, supervision, indemnity, appraisal, fitness for purpose and workforce assurance.
☐		Prescription Management Guidance	NHS Community Pharmacy Prescribing Resources	Explains when pharmacist prescribers can and cannot intervene to resolve prescription issues.
☐		Independent Prescribing Pharmacist Authentication Guidance	Authentication Guidance	Covers Smartcards, RBAC permissions, Care Identity, CIS2 and EPS access requirements.
☐		NHS Community Pharmacy Prescribing Onboarding Information	NHSBSA Community Pharmacy Prescribing	Explains declaration, onboarding, cost centre creation and implementation process.

* As applicable to the services provided by the pharmacy.

The Readiness Assessment

1. Eligibility (Minimum Entry Requirements)

Must all be met before applying

Requirement	Required	Complete	Date
Compliant with NHS Terms of Service	☒	☐	
Acceptable clinical governance systems in place	☒	☐	
Not subject to significant regulatory action	☒	☐	
Pharmacy First and/or PCS already provided	☒	☐	
Access to a pharmacist prescriber	☒	☐	
Ability to provide required prescribing availability	☒	☐	

If any of the above are incomplete, your status is automatically RED.

2. Readiness Assessment

How prepared are you to implement the service?

Requirement	Complete	Date
Pharmacist prescriber identified	☐	
GPhC IP annotation verified	☐	
Minimum 24 hours prescribing availability achievable	☐	
Suitable consultation facilities available	☐	
Governance lead identified	☐	
Named clinical supervisor identified	☐	
Clinical supervision arrangements agreed	☐	
Indemnity arrangements reviewed	☐	
Risk assessment completed	☐	
SOPs developed or updated	☐	
Business continuity plan reviewed	☐	
Business case completed	☐	

3. Digital Readiness

Requirement	Complete	Date
DCB0129 reviewed	☐	
DCB0160 completed	☐	
Business continuity arrangements in place	☐	
Clinical safety assessment completed	☐	
Supplier assurance documentation reviewed	☐	
EPS prescribing capability in place	☐	
NHS Care Identity / RBAC access arrangements confirmed	☐	

Are You Ready?



Green – Ready to Proceed

You already have a pharmacist prescriber, provide Pharmacy First and/or PCS and have established governance processes. Focus on onboarding and implementation.



Amber – Proceed with Preparation

You have access to a pharmacist prescriber but need to complete governance, supervision or digital readiness work before applying.



Red – Not Yet Ready

You currently lack the prescribing workforce or governance arrangements required to safely deliver prescribing services. Focus on workforce planning and readiness activities first.

The readiness journey



How Long Could This Take?

Typical Community Pharmacy Prescribing Implementation Journey

Stage	Indicative Timescale
 Decision to Proceed	Week 1
 Risk Assessment & Readiness Review	Weeks 1-2
 SOP Development & Business Continuity Planning	Weeks 2-4
 Select EPS Provider & Digital Solutions	Weeks 2-5
 Clinical Governance Review	Weeks 3-5
 Declaration Submission	Week 5-6
 ICB Review & Approval	Timescales vary locally
 NHSBSA Cost Centre Creation	Following ICB approval
 RBAC, Smartcard & EPS Configuration	1-3 weeks following approval
 Go Live as a Prescribing Pharmacy	Typically 4-12 weeks from initial decision

Typical Scenarios



Well-prepared pharmacy

Already employs a pharmacist prescriber, delivers Pharmacy First/PCS, and has established governance arrangements.

Indicative timescale:
4-8 weeks



Most pharmacies

Some governance, workforce or digital setup work required.

Indicative timescale:
8-12 weeks



Significant preparation required

Additional prescribing workforce, supervision arrangements or digital infrastructure still need to be established.

Indicative timescale:
12+ weeks



Important Note

These timescales are indicative only. The most variable element is often the local ICB assurance and approval process, which may differ considerably between systems. Pharmacies should therefore engage with their ICB early to understand local requirements and likely approval timescales.

Based on the national onboarding process, cost centre requirements, authentication guidance and prescribing specification.

Useful Resources and Further Reading

Digital & EPS

Resource	Link
Enabling EPS for your service	https://digital.nhs.uk/services/electronic-prescription-service/enabling-eps-for-your-service
DCB0129	https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/information-standards/governance/latest-activity/standards-and-collections/dcb0129-clinical-risk-management-its-application-in-the-manufacture-of-health-it-systems
DCB0160	https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/information-standards/governance/latest-activity/standards-and-collections/dcb0160-clinical-risk-management-its-application-in-the-deployment-and-use-of-health-it-systems
Authentication Guidance	https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/independent-prescribing-pharmacist-authentication-guidance-for-nhs-prescribing-based-services-in-community-pharmacy/

Governance

Resource	Link
Professional Assurance Framework	https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/professional-assurance-framework-for-delivering-nhs-community-pharmacy-clinical-services/
Incident Recording Guidance	https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/incident-recording-guidance-for-nhs-prescribing-based-services-in-community-pharmacy/
Learn from Patient Safety Events	https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/patient-safety-insight/learning-from-patient-safety-events/learn-from-patient-safety-events-service/
RPS Prescribing & Dispensing	https://www.rcpharm.org/policies/prescribing-and-dispensing-supply-administration-by-the-same-healthcare-professional/

Workforce Development

Resource	Link
GPhC Registers	https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/registers
Prescriber Competency Framework	https://www.rcpharm.org/professional-standards/a-competency-framework-for-all-prescribers/
CPPE Prescribing Gateway	https://www.cppe.ac.uk/gateway/prescribing
PEPP	https://www.cppe.ac.uk/career/pepp/default

Is it worth it?

Funding Available

Payment	Value
Set-up payment	£500
Monthly prescribing support payment	£525
Pharmacy First prescribing consultation	£17
Contraception consultation	£20 EHC -£25 OC

Actual costs will vary depending on pharmacy size, service model and supplier choice. All costs have not been published yet so may not be final. The national payments may not fully cover all implementation and ongoing costs.

An Independent Prescribing Service Readiness and Financial Planning Calculator is available separately to help pharmacy owners estimate potential implementation costs, ongoing costs and first-year financial impact.