

To:  
Independent Sector Providers of Private  
Medical Treatment

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Dear Colleague,

### **Private Healthcare Provision and Prescribing Responsibility for Medicines**

The purpose of this letter is to highlight the issues associated with the request for medicines from the Independent Sector and the limitations within which general practice can operate for patients who have been treated under this arrangement. Some General Practitioners have reported a rise in requests during the pandemic period to issue NHS prescriptions following private consultation and have raised concerns that this can cause strain on the GP-patient relationship.

Independent Sector providers are reminded that requests for ongoing prescribing of medication by the patient's GP may not necessarily be acceptable. As with any prescribed medicine the practitioner issuing the prescription has a clinical liability. When a GP considers that a treatment recommended by an independent sector provider is clinically appropriate and is content that the treatment falls within the remit of general practice, they may continue to prescribe the treatment, taking into consideration the following points.

1. The preference is that when a patient elects to seek alternative treatment from an independent sector provider, the prescription of any medicines linked to that episode of care should be managed by the independent sector provider.
2. Any medicine or appliance required in relation to elective procedures should be prescribed / supplied from the independent sector provider and not sought from the GP practice.
3. Sufficient post-operative medication, e.g. analgesia or anticoagulation, should be provided at discharge following procedures carried out by independent sector providers, without reference to GP prescription.
4. Independent sector providers are asked to only recommend treatments which are considered appropriate for HSC prescribing i.e. which are included in the

Northern Ireland Formulary and have robust clinical evidence on which the GP can make a decision.

5. Where services are being provided by an independent sector provider under a HSC Trust contract, the Trust will specify a **minimum of 5 days' of medicines to be supplied by independent sector healthcare providers** to patients. This supply may be up to 28 days in some cases, depending on the clinical specialty, the nature of the medication required and the quantity of medication already possessed by the patient.

Please note that under these circumstances, the HSC Standard Contract Terms and Conditions limits Independent Service Providers to prescribing within the NI formulary.

6. The [Red Amber List](#) of specialist medicines and regionally agreed [Shared Care Guidelines](#) have been expressly designed to ensure patients commenced on specialist medications remain under the direct or shared care of the HSC Trust speciality that initiated treatment. Independent sector providers should therefore **not ask** GPs to:
  - a. Prescribe a drug that is on the 'red list'. The prescribing and supply of a 'red list' drug should remain the responsibility of the independent sector provider (or HSC Trust if appropriate).
  - b. Provide HSC prescriptions for 'amber list' drugs in the absence of a shared care arrangement which outlines ongoing prescribing and monitoring arrangements, and has been agreed by both the independent sector provider and agreed with the GP directly.
7. Independent sector providers should not put GP colleagues in a difficult position with their patients by asking them to prescribe any drugs on the HSCB [Limited Evidence and Stop List](#).
8. The independent sector clinician should ensure that their patient is able to access medication in a manner that does not do anything that would cause strain to GP/patient relationship. If any doubt exists the clinician should speak directly with the GP and not rely on written or third party telephone calls.

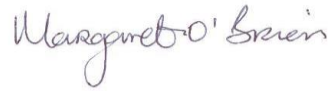
We would be grateful if independent sector healthcare providers could remind all relevant personnel of these requirements, review their processes and update any relevant documentation to ensure that the points above are reflected and adhered to.

Please contact Mr David Loughlin ([david.loughlin@hscni.net](mailto:david.loughlin@hscni.net)) if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,



**Joe Brogan**  
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**Head of Pharmacy and Medicines**  
**Management**



**Dr Margaret O'Brien**  
**Assistant Director of Integrated Care**  
**Head of GMS**

Cc HSC General Medical Practices