

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Issue Date: 5 February 2019

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATUS: INFORMATION

CATEGORY: HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LETTER

Title: Maintaining continuity of supply of medicines in the event of leaving the European Union in a 'no deal' scenario

Date of Expiry / Review This Welsh Health Circular remains in force until such time as it is replaced.

For Action by:
Chief Pharmacists; Community Pharmacists;
General Practitioners; and Dispensing Doctor
Practices

Action required by:
5 February 2019

Sender: Pharmacy and Prescribing Branch, Health and Social Services Group

HSSG Welsh Government Contact(s) :
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Enclosure(s): CPhO Letter

WHC/2019/005

Dear Colleague

MAINTAINING CONTINUITY OF SUPPLY OF MEDICINES IN THE EVENT OF LEAVING THE EUROPEAN UNION IN A 'NO DEAL' SCENARIO

Purpose

To provide NHS bodies in Wales with detail of measures being taken to ensure the continuity of supply of medicines as part of the UK Government's contingency preparations for leaving the European Union (EU) in a 'no deal' scenario.

Background

The Welsh Government has been working closely with the UK Government to understand the risks to the medicine supply chain in the event of the UK leaving the EU with 'no deal' on 29 March.

Contingency planning is well advanced across all parts of the medicines supply chain and actions are being coordinated at a UK level to ensure appropriate measures are in place to minimise any disruption to the supply of medicines resulting from leaving the EU.

It is of utmost importance NHS bodies understand the mitigating actions being taken to minimise supply chain disruption and ensure patients continue to be able to access the medicines they need. NHS bodies must ensure they do not, by their own actions, 'cut across' or compromise UK contingency measures.

Pharmacy professionals have a critical role in providing advice to patients on matters related to the supply of medicines. To ensure they are best placed to provide appropriate advice on the supply of medicines to the NHS in the event of leaving the EU with 'no deal', this letter sets out a summary of the work underway across Government.

From the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ	Llywodraeth Cymru Parc Cathays Caerdydd CF10 3NQ
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WHC/2019/005

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For onward circulation to:

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Medicine Supply Assessment

The UK Government has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of medicines supply to identify products that have a manufacturing touch point in the EU or wider European Economic Area (EEA) countries.

Six Week Stockpile

In August, the UK Government wrote to pharmaceutical manufacturers asking them to have additional supply in the UK, over and above their business as usual operational buffer stocks, by 29th March 2019. The UK Government is working extremely closely with industry to make sure there are significant supplies of these drugs in the UK. The majority of manufacturers are already actively stockpiling the minimum six weeks' supply of medicines over their existing stocks in line with UK Government requests, and work is continuing with outstanding manufacturers to encourage their compliance. Contracts for additional storage capacity, including for controlled drugs, ambient and refrigerated medicines, have been secured.

Work is ongoing with vaccine suppliers to ensure continued replenishment of the UK's significant existing stockpile of vaccines.

Alternative Transport Routes

Transport routes for all medicines have been reviewed and plans are being developed with industry for re-routing where necessary. The Government has agreed that medicines and medical products will be prioritised on alternative routes to maximise the ability for supply to continue unimpeded after 29 March 2019. This includes air-freight for short-life medicines.

In the event of a 'no deal' scenario this additional transport capacity and prioritisation includes prescription only medicines and pharmacy medicines, general sales list medicines and unlicensed medicines, including specials and investigational medicinal products used in clinical trials, and vaccines.

Serious Shortage Protocols

Amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations were laid before Parliament on 18 January allowing for 'serious shortage protocols' to be put in place for prescription only medicines in certain circumstances. A serious shortage protocol will be issued only in exceptional circumstances and with clinical involvement. The protocol may give pharmacies the ability to dispense smaller quantities, a different strength or a different pharmaceutical form of a medicine ordered on a prescription. In some circumstances a protocol could allow a pharmacist to make a generic or therapeutic substitution for a clinically equivalent product

Information for the public

The new Preparing Wales [website](#) provides a single source of information about the actions the Welsh Government is taking to prepare for the significant impact of a 'no deal' Brexit.

It is imperative that hospitals, GPs, and community pharmacies continue to act responsibly and consider the potential consequences for patients which, might arise from taking any local action, such as stockpiling medicines or increasing prescription durations. Such action compromises the UK contingency plans described in this letter, could create pressure on the availability of medicines for patients in other areas of Wales or the UK, and should therefore **not** be taken.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'E'.

Andrew Evans
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for Wales