

The different components that make up the EPS Service?

The EPS service is made up of a number of key components, ranging from the local system in your dispensary to the centrally held functionality which is commonly referred to as 'the Spine'. Whilst the NHS centrally manages

some of these components, pharmacy contractors are responsible for contracting with suppliers for the provision of others including the necessary hardware and software to access the service and the broadband

connection to link in to N3.

Most pharmacy system suppliers have chosen to use a central 'message handler' to support the transfer of messages between local systems and the Spine. This piece of software is

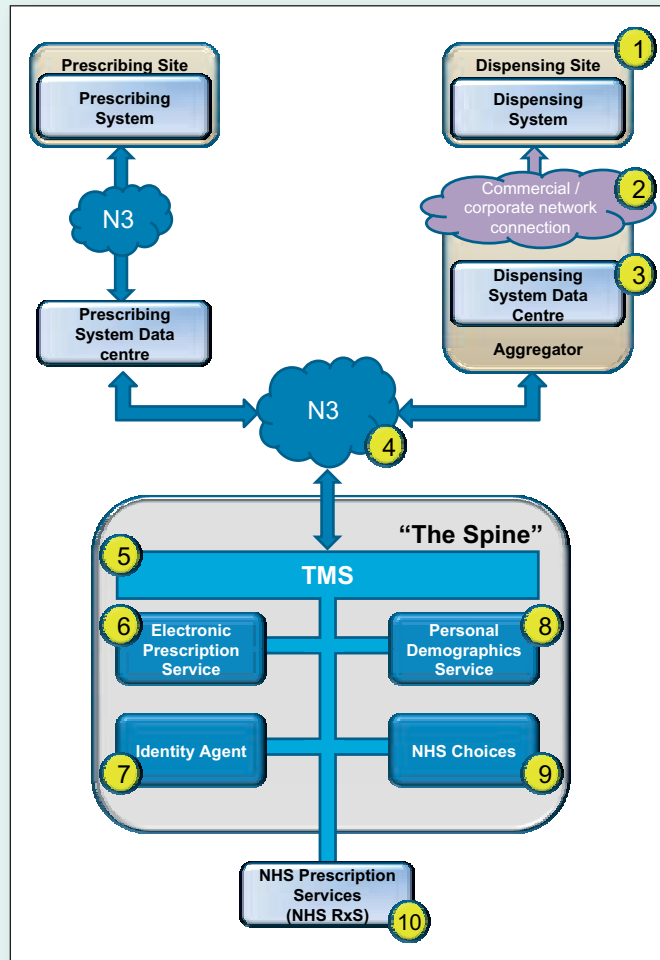
the responsibility of system suppliers rather than the NHS.

The diagram below provides a simplified illustration of the EPS architecture. More information on EPS is available on the PSNC website (www.psn.org.uk/eps).

1. The **dispensing system** is the component that resides within the dispensary and is what is used on a daily basis to aid in the dispensing process (i.e. the PMR, printer, scanner and smartcard reader). A list of commercial PMR suppliers can be found on the PSNC website.

2. The **network connection** is normally provided via a corporate organisation (if the site is part of a multiple), or via a network aggregator organisation. As well as connecting a pharmacy to the internet, aggregators connect pharmacies to the N3 (NHS) network and the services on offer. A list of companies providing commercial network aggregator services to pharmacies can be found on the PSNC website. Most system suppliers will arrange connectivity as part of one-stop service provision. Contractors wishing to contract directly with a network provider should check with their system supplier to ensure the connectivity option is compatible with the pharmacy system and appropriate for operating the EPS.

3. Most system suppliers have chosen a model that includes a central 'message handler' which supports processing messages from sites to and from the spine. The 'message handler' resides in a **central data-centre** and serves a number of pharmacies. Each system supplier is responsible for arranging their own data-centre/message handler.



4. The **N3** network is the NHS's internal network and allows organisations such as pharmacies to connect to spine services.

5. **TMS (Transactional Messaging Service)** is the spine's equivalent of a postman and is responsible for delivering messages to and from the individual spine components and the end user systems (in this case prescribing and dispensing systems).

Please note both the diagram and associated explanations are simplified.

6. The **EPS (Electronic Prescription Service)** component is a transient store that holds the electronic prescription messages throughout the prescribing and dispensing process. This is where the prescribing system sends the electronic prescriptions and where the dispensing system requests them from.

7. The **Identity Agent** checks the user has the authority to connect to the Spine and informs the prescribing or dispensing system of the activities the user has been sponsored to carry out. The prescribing or dispensing system then uses this information to allow the user to carry out those tasks.

8. The **Personal Demographics Service (PDS)** is the electronic equivalent of the phone book. It contains the NHS number, name, address and associated demographics (including any nominations) of each patient in England registered with an NHS number.

9. **NHS Choices** hold the details of which dispensing sites are EPS Release 2 enabled and the NHS Choices database is checked before a patient's nomination is set to ensure the electronic prescriptions can be processed by that site. It is essential that the information held on NHS Choices, including the pharmacy's current trading name and postcode is up to date. Pharmacies can check now at www.nhs.uk. Guidance on how to update the pharmacy information held on NHS Choices is available at www.psn.org.uk/nomination

10. When an electronic prescription is dispensed and the electronic endorsement (sometimes referred to as claim) message is submitted to the spine, TMS forwards this message to **NHS Prescription Services** so that the information can be used in the calculation of reimbursement.

N.B. The PharmaSys system is a centralised web-based application that has different system architecture to other systems on the market. This system has an integrated message handler and does not require pharmacies to connect via a network aggregator.