



Monitoring the new Pharmacy Contract – Essential Services

Many Primary Care Trusts have begun monitoring pharmacies for compliance with the new pharmacy contractual framework and are using the Pharmacy Assurance Framework published on the Primary Care Contracting website. In areas where this toolkit is used, PCTs, LPCs and pharmacy contractors can be assured that the contents have been agreed nationally and fulfil the requirements of monitoring whilst ensuring only those items required under the contractual framework are covered.

In some areas PCTs may have adopted their own monitoring toolkits prepared from scratch or by amendment of the national toolkit. In these areas, questions are being asked about whether a particular request by the PCT must be complied with, where this differs from those in the national toolkit.

PCTs have a right to enter pharmacy premises and ask for access to documents which are necessary for audit or monitoring purposes. This power does not extend to requiring pharmacy contractors to copy and send to the PCT such documents, although many pharmacists are happy to do so, as for example, with the pharmacy self assessment form.

One of the areas giving rise to many questions is Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The Essential Service specifications require the pharmacy to have appropriate SOPs for dispensing, repeat dispensing and support for self-care.

Monitoring compliance requires only the determination of whether the pharmacy has an appropriate SOP. It does not require the PCT to carry out a detailed analysis of the content of the SOPs. Indeed, it would be unwise for a PCT to carry out any detailed examination, because it will be unable to determine what is appropriate for the individual pharmacy concerned, and any shortcomings not identified, or suggestions made which themselves cause problems in delivery of the services, could lead to the PCT itself being involved in litigation.

For this reason, the most appropriate way to determine whether the pharmacy has an appropriate SOP is to ask to see it during a monitoring visit (but without reading it in detail), then to ask appropriate members of staff suitable questions about their procedures to establish the level of understanding and compliance with the SOP.