Service Availability Tool FAQ

Q: What is the 'Service Availability Tool'

The Service Availability Tool enables pharmacy contractors to provide live information to patients and primary care colleagues (e.g. other pharmacies, GPs and Out of Hours Providers) regarding the capacity of the pharmacy to offer consultations to patients for the following services on any given day:

- Common Ailments Service
- Emergency Medicines Supply Service
- Contraception Service
- Seasonal Influenza Service (where commissioned)
- Pharmacy Independent Prescribing Service (where commissioned)

Information captured within the tool is displayed on NHS Wales internet and intranet sites:

- On the NHS Wales 111 Pharmacy Search Directory (internet)
- On the NHS Wales Primary Care Services website (intranet)

The tool is designed to support community pharmacy contractors in managing patient flow, and referrals to pharmacy either through self-referral or referral by another NHS service provider.

The tool also records whether there is access to the NHS shared email address for the pharmacy on the given day. This information is only displayed on the intranet site accessible by other NHS service providers. It is intended to provide information to NHS service providers as to whether the shared mailbox can be accessed by the pharmacy team, which can be used to support effective communication (e.g. if not accessible, the mailbox should not be used for urgent communication that day).

Q: What is the purpose of the tool?

Pharmacy contractors, patients and other NHS service providers have indicated that having 'live' information for the capacity of community pharmacy teams to offer consultations for services on a given day would be beneficial to support the appropriate referral of patients to the pharmacy and management of patients within the pharmacy.

The capacity of a pharmacy to provide each service on a given day could vary depending on the type of service, workflow and demand, the tool provides a way for community pharmacy teams to communicate this to patients and those who are likely to be referring to pharmacy.

It may also help to reduce phone calls to the pharmacy requesting information on accessing services.

For example, during the seasonal influenza vaccination programme, a pharmacy may offer an appointment only system for this service. On a given day the pharmacy may have allocated flu vaccination appointments and have:

- No patients booked in – in which case the pharmacy can record the flu service as ‘available’
- A limited number of appointments still available to book – in which case the pharmacy can record the flu service as ‘limited availability’
- No appointments left to book – in which case the pharmacy can record the flu service as ‘not available today’.

As a result of offering the flu service there may be an impact on other services:

CAS/Contraception Services/PIPS – may have limited capacity or no capacity if only one member of staff is accredited to offer these services, or only one consultation room available. However, the capacity to offer the EMS service may be unaffected.

The tool enables a contractor to record the capacity of each service individually and update this should it change (e.g. all available flu appointments are booked – change to ‘not available today’).

Q: If I provide a rota service do I have to complete the tool?

Whilst rota services fall outside normal contractual hours, pharmacies providing pharmaceutical rota services may wish to use the tool to support effective communication with patients and NHS service providers. Use of the tool is not mandated but may help pharmacies in preventing inappropriate referrals for clinical services and phone calls to the pharmacy.

Those providing rota services can record EMS as ‘available’ but that other services are ’not available today’ unless the pharmacy wishes to accept referrals.

Pharmacy contractors and can also state whether the team on rota have access to the NHS shared email account. The NHS Wales 111 team have access to this information through the Primary Care Services website (intranet) which should be used by the NHS Wales 111 team to manage communication with pharmacy teams and management of patients appropriately.

Q: What information is recorded?

Pharmacy teams will be able to report the particular service as:

- **Available**: The pharmacy has capacity to see further patients for this service today - an appointment may need to be made / the patient may be asked to return later in the day
- **Limited Availability**: The pharmacy has limited capacity to see further patients for this service today - an appointment is likely to be needed / the patient is likely to be asked to return later in the day - it is recommended that the pharmacy is contacted prior to travelling large distances
- **Not Available Today**: The service is commissioned from this pharmacy but not available today. It may be available on the next day the pharmacy opens and patients should check with the pharmacy.

- **'Phone for availability'** - this means that the service is commissioned, but no report has been received from this pharmacy for this date, so patients are advised to call the pharmacy before travelling. This is the default setting displayed on both internet and intranet sites if the pharmacy does not record availability. It is also the default setting for any other NHS clinical service offered by the pharmacy.

Q:How do I complete the Service Availability Tool?

The tool is completed through NECAF which can be accessed through Primary Care Services Intranet - Home (sharepoint.com) [select log in]. The NWSSP User Guide provides detailed information on accessing, using and updating the tool.

Q: Why is the tool on NECAF and not Choose Pharmacy?

NECAF can be accessed by any member of the pharmacy team and was therefore considered to be a more appropriate application to record the capacity within services as would not be reliant for a pharmacist or pharmacy technician with Choose Pharmacy access to complete. It also supports completion of the tool when there is no-one in the pharmacy with access to Choose Pharmacy.

Q. Why can't the tool be updated automatically based on AWPD information regarding accreditation status?

The tool is not intended to confirm the availability of services within a pharmacy – an automatic feed from AWPD would only be able to confirm that an accredited person was working in a pharmacy on a given day for a given service.

The tool is intended to give a view on the capacity of the pharmacy to offer consultations to patients for the given services – this can only be completed by staff in the pharmacy who have a view on the current workload and capacity of the accredited staff to see patients.

Q:How often do I need to update the information?

The tool should be completed in the morning to provide information on the capacity of the pharmacy to offer consultations to patients for each service for that day. The tool can be updated at any time during the day should the capacity of the pharmacy to continue to offer consultations change.

Q: How is information displayed on patient facing (internet) site?

The NHS Wales 111 Pharmacy Search Directory displays information as shown below

Emergency Medicines Supply (EMS)	Available	A service intended to enable the supply of previously prescribed medication to patients, via the NHS, who may have run out of medication, or may have lost or damaged their medication, or have left home without them and they are unable to obtain a further prescribed supply before the next dose is due.	This service allows you to obtain an emergency prescription free of charge if you have run out of your regular medication and your GP is closed. You must attend in person and provide proof of the medication requested e.g., an empty packet with your name on it or a repeat prescription slip. This is not for all medications and the pharmacist will go through a consultation prior to issuing the medication.
Independent Prescribing for Common Ailments and Contraception	Limited Availability	This service is subject to availability of an accredited pharmacist and it is strongly recommended that this be checked with the pharmacy prior to attending.	The minor ailment conditions and contraception covered will depend on the individual pharmacist independent prescriber (PIPs) scope of practice but may include conditions relating to the ear, UTI, skin, coughs, and others. The patient will need to discuss or contact the pharmacy to see whether they can treat the required condition.

Descriptions are included in the pharmacy information page on the NHS Wales 111 website:

Service Availability
✔: Service commissioned to be provided; however it is strongly advised that you check availability prior to attending.
Available: Pharmacy has capacity to see further patients for this service today - an appointment may need to be made / the patient may be asked to return later in the day
Limited Availability: Pharmacy has limited capacity to see further patients for this service today - an appointment is likely to be needed / the patient is likely to be asked to return later in the day - it is recommended that the pharmacy is contacted prior to travelling large distances
Not Available Today: The service is commissioned but not available today. It may be available on the next day the pharmacy opens and patients should check with the pharmacy.

Q: How is information displayed on the NHS Primary Care (intranet) site?

Information is displayed in a table showing the pharmacies in that cluster and their reported availability. Note that blanks means that the pharmacy has not submitted a response that day.

ata correct as of: Tuesday 24-Oct-2023 05:56:13 PM

Contractor	Pharmacy	Street	Area	Post Code	Emergency Medicines Supply (EMS)	Provision of EC	Common Ailments Service	Independent Prescribing for Common Ailments and Contraception	Sore Throat Test and Treat
604810D	BOOTS UK LTD	36-38 HIGH STREET	DENBIGH	LL16 3RY	Available	Available	Available	Not Available	Not Available
604032A	CAERWYS PHARMACY PRACTICE LTD	THE SQUARE	BELL HOUSE NORTH STREET	CH7 5AN	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available
604387E	GORGEMEAD LTD (ROYLES PHARMACY)	22 HIGH STREET	DENBIGH	LL16 3RY					
604394A	L&E HEALTHCARE LIMITED (WELL STREET PHARMACY)	38 WELL STREET	RUTHIN	LL15 1AN	Available	Available	Available	Not Available	Available
604864L	ROWLAND L & CO. (RETAIL)LTD.	VULCAN HOUSE	THE SQUARE	LL21 0DE	Available	Available	Available	Available Limited Capacity	Available
604862A	ROWLAND L & CO.LTD.	37 VALE STREET	DENBIGH	LL16 3BY					
604862K	ROWLAND L & CO.LTD.	THE COACH HOUSE	THE ROE	LL17 0LU	Available	Available	Available	Not Available	Available

This tool can be accessed by any primary care service provider including community pharmacies -this enables a contractor to view other pharmacies in their cluster and other clusters across Wales to support effect signposting of patients where the pharmacy is unable to provide the service themselves.

It can also help GP Practice Care Navigators in supporting appropriate referrals to pharmacy. You may wish to discuss the use of the tool at Cluster and healthcare professional collaborative working visits.

Q: How do I obtain access to the NHS Primary Care (intranet) site for information relevant to my local area?

Visit Primary Care Services Common Login (wales.nhs.uk) - if you do not have an account, click on the register button on the right hand side.

Once logged to the site:

1. Select the 'Online Applications' drop down on the right and select 'Choose Pharmacy Availability'
2. Then filter to show the LHB and Cluster you need

Choose Pharmacy Service Availability

To enter your daily Choose Pharmacy Service Availability please go to NECAF.

Date (Year/Month/Day): 2023 10 24
Health Board: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Cluster: Central & South Denbighshire
Pharmacy: All

☐ **Monthly Availability**

Refresh Export to CSV

A blank entry for a service indicates that the pharmacy has yet to submit their availability

Q. How often is the information updated on internet and intranet sites?

The information is updated hourly throughout the day and will reset to the default display [‘phone for availability’] overnight.

Q. Will completing the tool affect continuity payments?

No, the service availability tool and continuity tool are not linked.

The continuity tool is used to demonstrate that the commissioned services are available on a given day, where available is defined as set out in the Drug Tariff

'an accredited service provider (as defined by the service specification) must be present at the commissioned pharmacy premise and have access to the necessary equipment to provide the service (as defined by the service specification) for the entire contracted opening hours of the pharmacy, on no fewer than 80% of the days on which the pharmacy is open (including part days)'

The service availability tool is used to support pharmacies in providing live information to patients and primary care colleagues (e.g. other pharmacies, GPs and Out of Hours Providers) regarding the capacity of the pharmacy to offer consultations to patients for the following services on any given day, where capacity is defined as:

'The ability of an accredited service provider within a working day to continue to receive self-referrals and/or referrals from other health and social care providers for same day service provision.'

These definitions were agreed as part of the work of the CPCF Implementation Group 2024/25 and we recognise that the term 'Service Availability Tool' may not align with these definitions. We would be interested in the views of contractors in whether the tool should be renamed as part of the review process to better reflect it's purpose in helping to better communicate capacity within a service on a given day.

Q. Will I be able to provide feedback to improve the tool?

The tool has been piloted with a number of pharmacies in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board with engagement with other NHS stakeholders (GPs and the NHS 111 Wales out of hours service) prior to it being available nationally, however there has been limited engagement with the tool to date.

As with any new functionality it is important to ensure that it meets the intended aims, which in this case are to

1. Provide pharmacy contractors with a mechanism to advise patients and other NHS service providers of their capacity to offer appointments for a given service at a given time, to support pharmacies in managing workflow.
2. Provide patients and NHS service providers with live information as to the capacity of an individual community pharmacy to offer consultations for a given service at a given time to support appropriate referral.
3. Provide NHS service providers with information relating to the pharmacies ability to access the NHS shared email account on a given day to support effective communication.

It is also important to understand any barriers and unintended consequences of new functionality.

To inform any further development of the tool pharmacy contractors are required to complete the tool for the period 1 November 2024 to 31 January 2025. During this time feedback can be provided on functionality, with a view to make refinements to the tool for 1 April 2025. CPW will also contribute formally to the review and refinement process in collaboration with health boards.

The views of other stakeholders (e.g. NHS service providers) will also be sought.

For all stakeholders, to ensure that this is a robust review there needs to be consistent use of the tool to build confidence in it's reliability as a source of information.

Q: What happens after 31 January 2025?

If contractors find the tool useful, they can continue to use it. If, however, through feedback and review significant development of the tool is required, then it may be taken offline to undertake development work in readiness for 1 April 2025.