

The next phase of EPS (Phase 4) is being introduced in GP practices across England. Almost all prescriptions will be signed and sent electronically from these practices, even for patients without a nomination. This will affect the way you work and will mean you will process more electronic prescriptions.

A token (patients may refer to these as paper copies of their prescription) will be printed by the GP practice for all patients without a nomination. This will be given to the patient or collected by a dispenser. The patient can take this token to any dispenser in England.

More than 32 million patients already have an EPS nomination and nothing will change for them.

What do you need to do when a patient presents a Phase 4 token?

You will need to scan the unique barcode on the token or enter the barcode number to retrieve the prescription from the NHS Spine. Phase 4 prescriptions will not be included in nominated release requests which download nominated prescriptions from the NHS Spine (either scheduled or manually).

Paper Phase 4 tokens will not have a prescriber signature on them because the prescription will have been signed electronically. The word 'nominated' will also not appear on the token.

You should scan the token to retrieve the prescription from the NHS Spine. You should not dispense from the token alone as the legal prescription is always the electronic prescription.

Post-dated prescriptions

Post-dated prescriptions will not be available to download until the date they become valid (the date set by the prescriber).

Endorsing

Endorsements written or printed onto any type of EPS token will not be processed by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA). As with all EPS prescriptions, endorsements need to be processed electronically using your dispensing system.

Exceptions

There are some exceptions where Phase 4 cannot be used, such as for items not in the dictionary of medicines and devices (dm+d) and instalment prescribing. Prescriptions for these items will be printed as FP10s and hand signed.

Repeats in Phase 4

Repeat prescriptions that are requested manually will be issued electronically. Patients will receive a new token for each prescription

For electronic **repeat dispensing** (eRD), also known as electronic batch prescribing, patients without a nomination will receive one token that they will need to keep hold of and present each time. Patients may ask to leave this token with you if they would like you to dispense all the issues in the batch. Patients should be given the next issue of their medication only when it is appropriate.

What are the benefits of EPS Phase 4?

- Most of your prescriptions will be processed electronically, reducing dual processing
- One main process for prescriptions will lead to a more efficient, faster and secure service
- End of month processing will be quicker due to fewer paper prescriptions
- The risk of dispensing duplicate prescriptions will reduce as electronic prescriptions can't be lost
- It will be possible to track more prescriptions using the EPS Prescription Tracker: www.digital.nhs.uk/epstracker



All existing nominations will remain valid and further nominations for appropriate patients should continue to be set. You don't need to do anything with existing nominations.



It is important that everyone working at your pharmacy or DAC understands these changes and can explain them to your patients.

Existing paper prescriptions

All existing paper prescriptions that have not been dispensed will still be valid until their normal expiry date. These prescriptions do not need to be reissued electronically.

Types of token

Prescription tokens are printed on green stationery at GP practices and dispensing tokens are printed on white stationery at community pharmacies or DACs.

Following the introduction of EPS Phase 4, the NHSBSA now accepts patient exemption declarations on either green prescribing tokens or white dispensing tokens.

Encouraging patients to set nominations

Many of the benefits of EPS are associated with nomination and so patients should still be given the opportunity to set one up.

You may want to encourage patients to set up a nomination if they:

- have regular prescriptions
- use your pharmacy/DAC every time
- are already using your prescription collection service

Patient consent is still required for nomination and it is up to the patient if they decide to nominate.

Information about Phase 4 for patients

You will be provided with a poster which you need to display prominently. If you wish to print additional copies, a downloadable version of the poster is available on the NHS Digital website.

Patients can also find more information about EPS at www.nhs.uk/EPS

Phase 4 checklist

- Does everyone in your pharmacy/DAC who needs a smartcard, including locums, have one? Smartcard guidance is available on the NHS Digital website: <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/registration-authorities-and-smartcards>
- Have you discussed with all your suitable patients the option of setting a nomination?
- Do all your staff know how to process electronic prescriptions?
- Have you reviewed your business continuity processes and procedures?
- Have you signed up to receive service alerts? <https://www.hscic.gov.uk/servicemanagement/status/subscribe/>
- Have you displayed the provided poster prominently?
- Does your team understand the changes and can they explain them to patients?

More information is available at www.digital.nhs.uk/EPS

Sign up to the NHS Digital Pharmacy bulletin at www.digital.nhs.uk/bulletins

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