

Health and Justice

Specialised Commissioning

NHS England

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Date

**CCG clinical leads**

**GPs**

**GP practice managers**

**NHS England NHS Improvement primary care leads**

Dear colleague

**Important information for practices to be aware of when registering patients being released from prison – new contractual requirement**

We are writing to you in relation to improvements that are being made to ensure individuals leaving the prison estate are registered with a GP. This is vital in helping to support better health outcomes and maintain continuity of care.

This relates to a contractual change in the [NHS England Standard General Medical Services (GMS) Contract 2017/18](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/17-18-gms-contract.pdf) (see page 64), which means that people can now register with your practice prior to their release from prison. In addition to improving the receipt of patient information, this is intended to simplify the process of registering individuals as they transition back in to the community and avoid unplanned treatment interruptions. This is particularly important, as we know a release from custody can be a crisis situation for some and can result in the reversal of previous health improvements.

This positive change has been informed by patients, primary care clinical leads from community and secure and detained settings, Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service and Public Health England.

**Requirement of GP practices**

To support with registering patients prior to their release from prison, practices are expected to update their procedures and follow this improved process by autumn 2019. You may find it useful to refer to the enclosed flow chart, which sets out how the registration of this patient group works.

To help with this, it is suggested that your practice appoints a GP lead on accepting prisoners back into the surgery.

Please do make every effort to implement this process to support improvements to patient care.

**The importance of community GPs not issuing prescriptions for people in prison**

Whilst we are writing to you about registering patients being released from prison, we would like to take the opportunity to remind you of the risk of people in custody continuing to access repeat medicines from their community GP. Incidents have been reported relating to continued requests for repeat prescriptions by the prisoner’s representative, which have resulted in the illicit diversion of medicines or inappropriate continuation of medicines once the person is released from custody.

Where detained individuals have not registered with a prison GP, the Patient Demographic Service address will show the prison address. GPs are therefore advised to avoid prescribing for these individuals.

Where a prisoner needs prescription medicine whilst they are in custody, they will be issued by a prison GP regardless of whether or not they are registered with the prison GP practice.

People released from prison will usually be given a minimum of seven day’s supply of the medicines they need to continue.

Should you have any queries relating to the information in this letter, please email [england.healthandjustice@nhs.net](mailto:england.healthandjustice@nhs.net).

Yours faithfully

Kate Davies Dr Jake Hard

Director of Health & Justice, [Clinical lead for the Health and Justice   
Armed Forces and Sexual Information System and Chair of the   
Assault Services Commissioning](https://uk.linkedin.com/in/dr-jake-hard-3617b047) RCGP Secure Environments Group

**Enc:**

Process for registering patients prior to their release from prison

**Process for registering patients prior to their release from prison**

Healthcare service identifies with the patient a suitable practice in the community where the patient could be registered on release, and contacts the practice.

The availability of registration at this practice should be checked on the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4).

Healthcare service will send a pre-registration notification to the receiving practice in the community (using a signed GMS1 registration form).

Up to one month prior to the date of release.

The receiving practice in the community confirms that the patient has been accepted for registration to take effect from the date notified.

On accepting a patient for pre-registration, the receiving practice would be accepting responsibility for full GMS registration of the patient from their date of release.

This will be in the form of a paper summary faxed / posted /secure emailed to the preferred surgery until GP2GP is integrated into SystmOne in 2020, when all medical data will be sent electronically.

If the receiving practice’s list is closed, the practice will notify the detained estate healthcare team.

The community practice may wish to keep a record of the refusal and its reason.

**Healthcare service**

*(in prison, immigration centre or secure children’s facility)*

**GP practice**

*(in the community)*

**Notes**

Healthcare team either find another receiving practice or take up the matter with the relevant commissioner.

If a practice has a closed list, then the patient would in normal circumstances have a choice of others to register at and would not normally require assistance from the commissioner.

Healthcare service arranges for the timely transfer of clinical information to the practice, with emphasis on medication history and substance misuse.

GP practice registers the patient.

A patient doesn’t need to have proof of address – and can register with their chosen practice, even if homeless.

Practices may want to invite patients for new patient checks, although there is no need to attend the practice just to complete the registration.