



COMMUNITY PHARMACY COMPLIANCE AID STATEMENT

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A guide to assisted medicines taking was produced by a multi-sectoral team made up of social care, care home and domiciliary care providers, hospital trusts, clinical commissioning groups, Local Pharmaceutical Committees, NHS E&I and Health Education England who worked across the Northwest. At CPCW, we host it on our website for ease of access here: <https://cpcw.org.uk/resources/assisted-medicines-guide/>

Community pharmacists are required to assess a patient who meets the criteria of the equality act and make 'reasonable adjustments' where warranted. Whilst blister packs are the most common adjustment requested on behalf of these patients, they are not usually the most appropriate, there are others that can offer benefits without the deskilling effect a blister pack has – MARS or reminder sheets, large font labels, use of app-based reminders, easy open lids, or recommendation of the use of magnifying glasses are just some examples of what can be potentially brought to bear.

If a patient does need a reasonable adjustment, and the pharmacist deems an MDS tray to be the appropriate kind, then they have a duty to provide one and ensure the patient understands how to use it. Over the years many studies have taken place and there is no solid evidence that they improve adherence or safety, in fact they introduce additional risk and are the most common form of dispensing errors, so they don't offer a blanket solution.

As pharmacy finds itself under increasing pressure of poor funding and difficulties with recruitment and retention, they're having to review the services they offer that aren't remunerated. MDS trays are one of these, and where the Equality Act assessment finds no reason to supply one, then they're often choosing not to. Trays should not be provided for simple convenience, or when carers simply want one.

Only the pharmacist can make the assessment, and the recommendation for trays (or otherwise) is theirs to make. Trays cannot be ordered by a prescriber etc; however, they can request that an assessment be carried out. Any pharmacist deeming trays as warranted or unwarranted then carries the professional responsibility for that decision.

In some areas locally commissioned services exist whereby a prescriber can request a tray for someone they think would benefit from one, even though they don't fall under the Equality Act. This could be an option for the future perhaps. Other than that, if a patient wants a tray but isn't 'entitled' to one, then that's a commercial arrangement between them and the pharmacist and some pharmacies still offer this as a paid extra, although

many are removing or considering removing that option due to workforce challenges pressuring delivery of the core and advanced contract.

So, in theory, all pharmacies should supply blister packs where they've done the assessment, and one is warranted. As such, there is no official list of providers (as there would be for Pharmacy First for example). Some pharmacies will do them at the patients/carers request out of good will, but as mentioned above, this is becoming increasingly difficult to do.

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The starting point would be at the patient's usual pharmacy asking if they provide trays on request, and if not then maybe ask them to conduct an Equality Act assessment and see if they also think it's the best option for the patient.

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