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Head Office: Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, London WC1N 1AB  
Tel: 020 7837 6622 • Email: [info@npcuk.org](mailto:info@npcuk.org) • Web: [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org)

14 July 2020

Sir Simon Stevens  
NHS England  
PO Box 16738  
Redditch  
B97 9PT

Dear Sir Simon,

**Re: Exclusion of the Elderly and other vulnerable people**

The National Pensioners Convention is the largest campaigning organisation in the UK representing around 1.5 million older people. We work for the benefit of all pensioners – now and in the future – in order that they may have dignity in retirement.

We are appalled at the press article at the weekend that states NHS England are giving new guidance to GP surgeries to abandon taking requests for repeat prescriptions by phone with effect from 1 September.

As a publicly funded body, your duty is to ensure equality of access to all services under your umbrella. This duty is now severely undermined by encouraging access to repeat prescriptions only online or by personal visit.

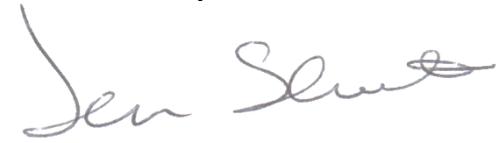
The rush to move to online services is damaging to older people as they do not engage with technology whether that is because of cost or other reasons. The same may be said of other vulnerable groups in society that have no access to online facilities. For NHS England to force this upon the older generation of patients within GP surgeries is either remarkably naïve or uncaring.

Likewise, the difficulties older people have in travelling to GP surgeries is a burden they really don't need right now. The same difficulties would be experienced by those with a variety of disabilities. We are very concerned that in the light of COVID-19 and the physical, mental and emotional well-being of those who have spent months in lockdown, that medication will not reach those it should.

We urge you to re-think your strategy and encourage GPs to retain the option to access repeat prescriptions by phone. Exclusion is becoming the norm and we must work together to ensure that we maintain the traditional accesses whilst introducing new ones slowly and consciously.

There is little time left until 1 September and we expect that as a publicly funded body you will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment and let us have a copy before moving to implementation on that date.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Shortt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Jan Shortt**  
**General Secretary**