



Head Office: Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, London WC1N 1AB
Tel: 020 7837 6622 • Email: info@npcuk.org • Web: www.npcuk.org

14 July 2020

Professor Martin Marshall
Royal College of General Practitioners
30 Euston Square
London
NW1 2FB

Dear Professor Marshall,

Re: Exclusion of Elderly and other vulnerable patients

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 are giving new guidance to GP surgeries to abandon taking requests for repeat prescriptions by phone with effect from 1 September.

Indeed, we have examples of GP surgeries already warning patients of the change.

Older and vulnerable people have had a stressful time during COVID lockdown, and some are still needing to shield because of their underlying health conditions. For the majority of this group in society, online access is not an option, either because of cost or other reasons. A phone call is a quick, easy way of ordering a repeat prescription when needed. To have that access now taken away is at best naïve, at worst, uncaring.

Likewise, the attendance in person at a GP surgery is something that is currently very difficult. Some surgeries may be miles away from home with a restricted bus service that may take hours to do a round trip. Already feeling poorly, this is not a trauma we believe the RCGP would support, given that your organisation is about improving patient services and experiences.

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 stop and think about what GPs are doing to their communities by swiftly repeating the mantra of NHS England – a publicly funded body whose duty is to ensure equality of access to all the services under its umbrella.

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.

We enclose a copy of our letter to Sir Simon Stevens, NHS England and await his, and your reply.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jan Shortt
General Secretary