

3 November 2020

Dear Recipient

**Independent Healthcare Services: important message for all prescribers.**

It has come to our attention that the frequency of requests to some NHS prescribers to prescribe medications by independent healthcare services may be rising during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, there is concern that some services are not registered in Scotland and the prescribing practice is out with national or local guidelines.

We therefore wish to reinforce that all prescribers should follow their professional guidance for both the prescribing and dispensing of medicines in this context. For example, the General Medical Council **Good practice in prescribing and managing medicines and devices** (March 2013) guidance states:

*37. If you prescribe at the recommendation of another doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional, you must satisfy yourself that the prescription is needed, appropriate for the patient and within the limits of your competence.*

*39. You will be responsible for any prescription you sign.*

*43. If you are uncertain about your competence to take responsibility for the patient's continuing care, you should seek further information or advice from the clinician with whom the patient's care is shared or from another experienced colleague. If you are still not satisfied, you should explain this to the other clinician and to the patient, and make appropriate arrangements for their continuing care.*

Healthcare Improvement Scotland regulates certain independent (non-NHS) healthcare services providing care to people in Scotland. You can find the list of Independent healthcare providers registered with us and related information at the following link:

[http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our\\_work/inspecting\\_and\\_regulating\\_care/independent\\_healthcare/find\\_a\\_provider\\_or\\_service.aspx](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our_work/inspecting_and_regulating_care/independent_healthcare/find_a_provider_or_service.aspx). If you are asked to prescribe by an independent healthcare service for people in Scotland, and have concerns about the request please contact Healthcare Improvement Scotland directly at [his.ihcregulation@nhs.scot](mailto:his.ihcregulation@nhs.scot).

Thank you for your assistance.



**Dr Simon Watson**  
Medical Director



**Sandra McDougall**  
Interim Director for  
Quality Assurance



**Ann Gow**  
Director of NMAHP/  
Deputy Chief Executive



**Laura McIver**  
Chief Pharmacist