

This publication was withdrawn on 18 July 2024

The [Medicines and Medical Devices Act](#) became law in February 2021.

See the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) [Register of authorised online sellers of medicines](#) for a list of all websites that are authorised by MHRA to sell medicines online.

Top Lines

- It is crucial patients are protected to the highest possible standards when accessing online healthcare services.
- There must be strong dispensing safeguards in place to prevent unsafe practices.
- Improved technology and changing trends mean it is now possible for a patient or their carer to be prescribed and supplied with medicines without physically seeing a clinician.
- Delivering pharmacy services online provides choice and convenience, especially for patients who find it difficult to visit their local pharmacy. However, it is vital that patient safety is protected at all times.

What does the Bill do?

- The Bill will enable us to implement a comprehensive UK scheme for regulating online sales.
- This Bill allows us to consider a holistic approach to the online supply of medicines, and if appropriate, introduce further safeguards around dispensing where the patient is not physically present.
- This will allow us to prevent abuse of the system and protect patients from obtaining multiple packs of prescription medicines from various sources, protecting their wellbeing.

What is the system we have now?

- In the UK more than 2 million people a year buy medicines over the internet from legitimate online suppliers including registered pharmacies.
- Online sellers of medicines must register with the MHRA and display the Distance Selling Logo on every page of their website offering to supply medicines to the public. The regulations set out the conditions relating to online sales of medicines that sellers need to fulfil.

Preventing abuse of the system

- We are determined to prevent the abuse of digital health provision through appropriate dispensing safeguards, for example where patients try to obtain multiple prescriptions for the same medicine or where a patient's prescribing request is correctly turned down but the patient tries another avenue.
- The vast majority of medicines prescribed online and dispensed through a registered pharmacy are done appropriately and safely. The power in the Bill will enable reinforced dispensing safeguards to be put in place to prevent abuse.
- We are working collaboratively to look at how to better regulate digital healthcare provision in legislation, to prevent a small number of online organisations from operating without the necessary oversight.

Distance Selling Logo

- This Bill will enable us to introduce a national registration scheme for online sellers to replace the EU scheme. The logo that must be displayed by online suppliers of medicines is under copyright to the EU and so the UK cannot continue with that scheme without EU permission.
- It is envisaged that a replacement national scheme would retain some aspects of the EU scheme but will need to be adapted in order to meet the needs of the UK. A new scheme is likely to require registration and mandate the display of a UK logo at a minimum.