

Registered pharmacy inspection report

Pharmacy name: Medical Specialists

Address: Westminster House, 49 Knowsley Street, BURY, Lancashire, BL9 0ST

Pharmacy reference: 1104466

Type of pharmacy: Internet / distance selling

Date of inspection: 26/02/2025

Pharmacy context and inspection background

This is a private pharmacy which provides its services to people through its website www.medical-specialists.co.uk. The website allows people to access the pharmacy's online prescribing service which offers prescription medicines for a wide range of conditions. The pharmacy mainly supplies medicines for the treatment of erectile dysfunction and menopause as well as medicines used for contraception and weight loss. People do not visit the pharmacy in person. The prescribing service is not registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

This was a reinspection following an inspection in May 2024 where the pharmacy did not meet Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.6, 2.2, 3.1, 4.2 and 4.3. This reinspection focused on those Standards which had previously not been met. Since the last inspection the pharmacy had changed some of its policies related to its prescribing service and had completed reviews and an audit of its service. There was an improvement in the consultation records kept by its prescribers and the website had been reviewed and changed to no longer advertise off-label medicines. The pharmacy had also implemented a new process for handling medicines that could not be delivered to people and returned to the pharmacy by the courier service.

Overall outcome: Standards not all met

Required Action: Improvement Action Plan

Follow this link to [find out what the inspections possible outcomes mean](#)

Standards not met

Standard 4.2

- The pharmacy does not always provide all its services safely. It prescribes a range of medicines including those classed as higher-risk along with treatments for conditions which require ongoing monitoring. And in some cases, it cannot demonstrate that it seeks sufficient assurances from people requesting these medicines to make sure they are only supplied when clinically appropriate. Some medicines are prescribed by solely relying on an online questionnaire. And the pharmacy does not routinely use other resources to verify the information given to it by people. This increases the risk of the pharmacy supplying medicines to people when it may not be clinically appropriate.
- The pharmacy does not always obtain consent to communicate with a person's regular practitioner or take additional steps to ensure a medicine is appropriate when prescribing medicines for long-term conditions or those classed as high risk. So, there is an increased chance of the pharmacy supplying medicines to people when they are not clinically appropriate.

Standards that were met with areas for improvement

Standard 1.1

- The pharmacy has risk assessments in place for the services provided, but these do not always consider and mitigate all of the risks associated with its prescribing service. Risk assessments do not cover the use of other sources to verify the health information people provide other than a questionnaire which also includes medicines that require regular monitoring. So it cannot be assured that the information it uses to base prescribing decisions on is accurate and up to date to ensure that the treatments are safe and appropriate.

Standard 4.2

- The pharmacy generally conducts an assessment when prescribing medicines for dental conditions. However, it could do more to seek assurances around whether people have received specialist dental advice for products such as Duraphat toothpaste.

Principle 1: The governance arrangements safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public

Summary outcome: Standards not all met

Table 1: Inspection outcomes for standards under principle 1

Standard	Outcome of individual standard	Area for improvement/ Area of good or excellent practice
1.1 - The risks associated with providing pharmacy services are identified and managed	Met	Area for improvement
1.2 - The safety and quality of pharmacy services are regularly reviewed and monitored	Met	
1.3 - Pharmacy services are provided by staff with clearly defined roles and clear lines of accountability	Met	
1.4 - Feedback and concerns about the pharmacy, services and staff can be raised by individuals and organisations, and these are taken into account and action taken where appropriate	Met	
1.5 - Appropriate indemnity or insurance arrangements are in place for the pharmacy services provided	Met	
1.6 - All necessary records for the safe provision of pharmacy services are kept and maintained	Met	
1.7 - Information is managed to protect the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of patients and the public who receive pharmacy services	Met	
1.8 - Children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded	Met	

Principle 2: Staff are empowered and competent to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public

Summary outcome: **Standards met**

Table 2: Inspection outcomes for standards under principle 2

Standard	Outcome of individual standard	Area for improvement/ Area of good or excellent practice
2.1 - There are enough staff, suitably qualified and skilled, for the safe and effective provision of the pharmacy services provided	Met	
2.2 - Staff have the appropriate skills, qualifications and competence for their role and the tasks they carry out, or are working under the supervision of another person while they are in training	Met	
2.3 - Staff can comply with their own professional and legal obligations and are empowered to exercise their professional judgement in the best interests of patients and the public	Met	
2.4 - There is a culture of openness, honesty and learning	Met	
2.5 - Staff are empowered to provide feedback and raise concerns about meeting these standards and other aspects of pharmacy services	Met	
2.6 - Incentives or targets do not compromise the health, safety or wellbeing of patients and the public, or the professional judgement of staff	Met	

Principle 3: The environment and condition of the premises from which pharmacy services are provided, and any associated premises, safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public

Summary outcome: **Standards met**

Table 3: Inspection outcomes for standards under principle 3

Standard	Outcome of individual standard	Area for improvement/ Area of good or excellent practice
3.1 - Premises are safe, clean, properly maintained and suitable for the pharmacy services provided	Met	
3.2 - Premises protect the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of patients and the public who receive pharmacy services	Met	
3.3 - Premises are maintained to a level of hygiene appropriate to the pharmacy services provided	Met	
3.4 - Premises are secure and safeguarded from unauthorized access	Met	
3.5 - Pharmacy services are provided in an environment that is appropriate for the provision of healthcare	Met	

Principle 4: The way in which pharmacy services, including management of medicines and medical devices, are delivered safeguards the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public

Summary outcome: Standards not all met

Table 4: Inspection outcomes for standards under principle 4

Standard	Outcome of individual standard	Area for improvement/ Area of good or excellent practice
4.1 - The pharmacy services provided are accessible to patients and the public	Met	
4.2 - Pharmacy services are managed and delivered safely and effectively	Met	Area for improvement
4.3 - Medicines and medical devices are: obtained from a reputable source; safe and fit for purpose; stored securely; safeguarded from unauthorized access; supplied to the patient safely; and disposed of safely and securely	Met	
4.4 - Concerns are raised when medicines or medical devices are not fit for purpose	Met	

Principle 5: The equipment and facilities used in the provision of pharmacy services safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public

Summary outcome: **Standards met**

Table 5: Inspection outcomes for standards under principle 5

Standard	Outcome of individual standard	Area for improvement/ Area of good or excellent practice
5.1 - Equipment and facilities needed to provide pharmacy services are readily available	Met	
5.2 - Equipment and facilities are: obtained from a reputable source; safe and fit for purpose; stored securely; safeguarded from unauthorized access; and appropriately maintained	Met	
5.3 - Equipment and facilities are used in a way that protects the privacy and dignity of the patients and the public who receive pharmacy services	Met	

What do the summary outcomes for each principle mean?

Finding	Meaning
✓ Excellent practice	The pharmacy demonstrates innovation in the way it delivers pharmacy services which benefit the health needs of the local community, as well as performing well against the standards.
✓ Good practice	The pharmacy performs well against most of the standards and can demonstrate positive outcomes for patients from the way it delivers pharmacy services.
✓ Standards met	The pharmacy meets all the standards.
Standards not all met	The pharmacy has not met one or more standards.