

Distributing Medicines in Secure Institutions

1. Service Summary

Unilink's Medication Distribution solution (MDL) is a cloud-hosted software solution designed to support the safe, secure and efficient distribution of in-possession medicines within secure institutions, including prisons, secure hospitals, youth custody and detention centres.

The service enables healthcare staff to allocate prescribed medication to secure locker compartments, which residents can access biometrically at an appropriate time. By separating medication collection from staffed medical hatches, the service improves patient privacy, reduces queues and flashpoints, and minimises the risk of bullying, coercion or medication diversion.

The service can be deployed in an approved customer data centre or customer cloud environment. MDL provides centralised configuration, task management, monitoring and audit, while supporting integration with custodial and staff systems.

2. Service Features

The service provides secure, software-controlled management of medication distribution, including:

- Biometric access to medication compartments to ensure correct recipient collection
- Support for locker systems with configurable compartment sizes and quantities
- Randomised compartment allocation on each cycle to improve medication security
- Clear compartment identification to simplify loading and reduce error
- Open-all function to support efficient loading by healthcare staff
- Automatic removal of resident access once medication is collected
- Audible alerts if compartments are left open
- Networked operation supporting centralised administration
- Task management across healthcare and operational staff roles
- Real-time status monitoring of collected and uncollected medication
- Full audit logging of medication loading, access and collection events
- Integration with custodial and staff systems where required

3. Service Benefits

The service delivers clinical, operational and safety benefits, including:

- Improves health outcomes and wellbeing through reliable medication access
- Enhances patient confidentiality and dignity
- Reduces bullying, coercion and medication diversion risks
- Removes queues and flashpoints at medical hatches
- Enables residents to collect medication at appropriate times
- Frees healthcare staff time to focus on clinical care
- Immediately highlights missed medication collections
- Supports monitoring of potentially at-risk residents
- Provides a complete and auditable record for governance and compliance
- Improves regime planning flexibility for operational staff

4. Service Scope

The service covers the digital management and control of medication distribution processes, from allocation and loading through to resident collection and audit.

Healthcare staff use staff-facing interfaces to manage medication loading tasks, monitor collection status and review exceptions. Residents access assigned medication compartments using biometric verification only when authorised. Operational and clinical teams can review reports and alerts to support oversight and intervention.

The service supports deployment at single or multiple locations through centrally governed configuration and integrates with relevant custodial and staff systems where required.

5. How the Service Works

Prescribed medication is allocated to individual residents through the service and loaded by healthcare staff into secure locker compartments. The system guides staff during loading to reduce error and records each action for audit purposes.

Residents are notified when medication is available and can collect it at a convenient time by authenticating biometrically at the locker unit. Once medication is collected, access is automatically revoked to prevent reuse or contraband storage. If medication is not collected within defined parameters, the service flags this to staff for follow-up.

The service continuously monitors compartment status, collection events and exceptions. Alerts are generated where compartments remain open or medication is not collected as expected. All activity is logged centrally, supporting operational review, clinical governance and compliance.

The service is centrally hosted, with configuration, workflows, reporting and audit managed through the platform. This enables consistent operation across residential units and, where applicable, across multiple establishments, while reducing local system administration. Secure integrations exchange data with custodial, case management, financial and other operational systems to ensure information remains up to date and processes are completed end to end.

Authorised users can access reports and audit information to support operational management, compliance and assurance activities. All locker self-service interactions are logged, providing a clear and traceable record of activity and outcomes.

6. Onboarding and Offboarding

6.1 Onboarding

Onboarding is delivered as a structured process, beginning with confirmation of scope, number of locker units, operational workflows and user roles. The service is configured to reflect local clinical and operational policies, including access rules, alerts and reporting requirements.

Where required, integrations with custodial or staff systems are implemented and tested. Staff training is provided to support safe and effective operation. Typical onboarding timescales range from 6 to 12 weeks, depending on deployment size and integration requirements.

6.2 Offboarding / exit management

Offboarding is managed in a controlled and auditable manner. This includes withdrawal of system access, decommissioning of integrations and provision of agreed audit data and reports. Offboarding activities are typically completed within 4 to 8 weeks, subject to agreed exit arrangements.

7. Support and Service Management

Incidents and service requests are managed in accordance with the agreed contractual service levels and the operational requirements of custodial environments.

Initial response times are:

- High and medium priority incidents: within 1 hour
- Low priority incidents and general service requests: within 2 hours

Standard support hours are Monday to Friday, 8:00am–5:00pm (UK time). In recognition of the critical nature of custodial systems, High priority incidents are supported 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Support is delivered using an ITIL-aligned service management framework. All requests are logged through a central service desk and assessed by a triage function, which assigns priority and routes issues to the appropriate resolver group. Resolution is provided through structured 1st, 2nd and 3rd line support, with clear escalation procedures in place.

Customers are provided with a dedicated Support portal and an assigned Business Account Manager, who provides ongoing service oversight, technical engagement and escalation support. Service performance and incident trends are reviewed through agreed governance processes.

8. Service Constraints and System Requirements

8.1 Service constraints

- Requires secure network connectivity to support centralised management
- Medication workflows must align with local clinical governance policies
- Biometric access depends on correct enrolment and device availability.

8.2 System requirements

- Traka lockers with biometric fingerprint readers
- Standard PCs or approved staff terminals with a supported web browser for healthcare and operational users
- Secure connectivity to the hosting environment (customer cloud)
- User access managed in line with customer security policies

9. Security and Compliance

The service is designed with privacy and data protection controls built in by design, including role-based access control, audit logging and data minimisation, supporting UK GDPR and relevant information assurance requirements.

Where Unilink provides the managed service, it operates within ISO 27001-certified information security controls, GDPR-compliant data handling practices, and regular external security testing aligned to customer governance.

10. Training

Training is provided for healthcare and operational staff covering system operation, medication loading workflows, exception handling and reporting. Training can be delivered remotely or on-site and aligned to go-live activities.

11. Ordering and Invoicing

This service is ordered via the Digital Marketplace in line with G-Cloud call-off procedures. Pricing is provided separately in the G-Cloud pricing document.

12. Trial Service

A time-limited pilot or proof-of-concept can be provided to validate visit workflows, integrations and assurance policies prior to wider deployment.