

Amazon prepares to take on high street pharmacies

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First they gave you books. Then they delivered groceries, streamed music and commissioned their own films and television programmes. Now the people at Amazon are looking to deliver your medicines as well.

The ecommerce company posted an advert for a "pharmacies market general manager" this month. "If you'd like to help us build the place to find and buy anything online, this is your chance to

make history," the advert states. It is understood that the company is preparing to launch itself into another lucrative market.

In the US, more than 4 billion prescriptions are ordered every year. In 2015, an estimated \$300 billion was spent on prescription drugs. The UK dispensing chemists make up a market worth £12 billion, according to Ibis-World, a market researcher.

Amazon recently started selling medical supplies and equipment in the

US. In Japan Amazon's Prime Now service already includes a section for pharmaceuticals and sells drugs to patients with approval from a pharmacist.

David Jinks, head of consumer research at ParcelHero, an independent parcel broker that closely monitors Amazon's activity, said that the online retailer could find a way into the the UK pharmaceutical market through the National Health Service's electronic prescription service.

"The UK is often used as a test bed by

Amazon for new services and Amazon may consider a trial UK pharmaceutical launch," Mr Jinks said. However, any such move was likely to face strong competition. He said that the UK market was one of the most highly regulated in the world, with strict rules about who can dispense medicines. An Amazon pharmacy would need to be registered with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Amazon declined to comment on the prospect of such a launch.

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