

Self-Care and Over The Counter (OTC) Medicines – Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

03 September 2018

Purpose of paper

The purpose of the paper is inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the outcome from the Greater Nottingham Joint Commissioning Committee around Nottingham City CCG adopting and actively implementing Nottingham North and East, Nottingham West and Rushcliffe CCG Self Care Guidelines

Background

The government recently undertook a national consultation about whether over the counter medicines should be available on prescription for minor ailments.

Following the consultation, guidance has been produced by NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners to restrict prescribing medications for conditions which fall into the following categories:

- A condition that is self-limiting and does not require medical advice or treatment as it will clear up on its own
- A condition that is a minor illness and is suitable for self-care and treatment with items that can easily be purchased over the counter from a pharmacy.
- Vitamins, minerals and probiotics: these are classified as items of limited clinical effectiveness, where there is a lack of robust evidence for clinical effectiveness.

In addition to this national guidance, neighbouring CCG's: Nottingham North and East, Nottingham West and Rushcliffe, already have a guideline around [self-care and over the counter medicines](#) (see Appendix 1, 1a, 1b)

The Local Guideline states: As part of its self-care strategy, NHS Nottingham North and East, Nottingham West and Rushcliffe Clinical Commissioning Groups recommend that patients visit their local community pharmacy to purchase medicines and treatments for minor, short term conditions. It is advised that all prescribers, including GPs and non-medical prescribers, direct patients to purchase recommended, readily available, over the counter medicines (OTC), treatments and products.

Within Nottingham City there is also a minor ailment service, Pharmacy First, delivered through community pharmacies enabling patients who are exempt from prescription charges to receive treatment for minor ailments.

A proposal was put forward to align and actively implement the self care guidelines across the Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Partnership. As part of this proposal the EQIA (please see

Appendix 2 for full details) recommended patient engagement be carried out within NHS Nottingham City CCG around the exclusion criteria included within the south county CCG guidelines.

Current position

NHS Nottingham City CCG have been out to patient engagement to adopt the same Guideline (See Appendix 1, 1a, 1b) as NHS Nottingham North and East, Nottingham West and Rushcliffe CCG's, to therefore bring Nottingham City CCG inline within the Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Partnership.

Note: NHS Mansfield and Ashfield and Newark and Sherwood CCG's currently have a similar guideline and are updating the guideline in line with the outcome of the national consultation.

The aim of the engagement was to gather the views of patients, clinicians, partners and the wider public in Nottingham City to understand the potential impact of the following proposal:

- **To limit prescriptions of over the counter medicines on prescription for minor ailments**
- **To gain patient feedback about the suitability of the exceptions as set down nationally for Nottingham patients.**

The conditions below are those that it is proposed that can be treated safely and effectively using over the counter medicines.

We are proposing that the following minor illnesses can be treated safely and effectively using over the counter medicines. Our recommendation is that treatments for these conditions are no longer available on prescription.

- Acute sore throat
- Conjunctivitis
- Coughs, colds and nasal congestion
- Cradle Cap
- Dandruff (mild scaling of the scalp without itching)
- Diarrhoea (adults)
- Dry eyes/sore tired eyes
- Earwax
- Excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis)
- Haemorrhoids
- Head lice
- Infant colic
- Infrequent cold sore of lips
- Indigestion and heartburn
- Infrequent constipation
- Infrequent migraine
- Insect bites/stings
- Mild cystitis
- Mild irritant dermatitis
- Mild acne
- Mild dry skin
- Mild to moderate hay fever/seasonal rhinitis
- Minor burns/scalds
- Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/or fever (e.g. aches and sprain, headache, period pain, back pain)
- Mouth ulcers
- Nappy rash
- Oral thrush
- Prevention of dental cavities
- Probiotics
- Ringworm/athletes foot
- Sunburn due to excessive sun exposure
- Sun protection
- Teething/mild toothache
- Threadworm
- Travel Sickness
- Vitamins and minerals for prevention/maintenance.
- Warts and verrucae
- **Fungal nail infections ***
- **Upset stomach ***
- **Vaginal thrush ***

* these are local additions to the national guidance

Exceptions

The national guidance has some exceptions, which have been included within the proposed local self-care guideline. There are certain situations where patients should continue to have their treatments prescribed. They are:

- Patients prescribed an over the counter treatment for a long term condition (e.g. regular pain relief for chronic arthritis).
- For the treatment of more complex forms of minor illnesses (e.g. severe migraines that are unresponsive to over the counter medicines).
- For those patients that have symptoms that suggest the condition is not minor.
- Treatment for complex patients (e.g. immunosuppressed patients).
- Patients on prescription only treatments.
- Patients prescribed over the counter products to treat an adverse effect or symptom of a more complex illness and/or prescription only medications.

- Circumstances where the product licence doesn't allow the product to be sold over the counter to certain groups of patients. This may vary by medicine, but could include babies, children and/or women who are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- Patients with a minor condition suitable for self-care that has not responded enough to treatment with an over the counter product.
- Patients where the clinician considers that the presenting symptom is due to a condition that would not be considered a minor condition.
- Circumstances where the prescriber believes in their clinical judgement, exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the recommendation to self-care.
- Individual patients where the clinician considers that their ability to self-manage is compromised as a consequence of medical, mental health or significant social vulnerability to the extent that their health and/or wellbeing could be adversely affected, if reliant on self-care.
- Please note - being exempt from paying a prescription charge does not automatically provide an exception to the guidance (this includes having a prescription pre-payment certificate).

The findings from engagement report are that respondents would, in line with National Guidance, broadly support a proposal to restrict over the counter medicines for minor illnesses bearing in mind the exceptions are adhered to as long as some issues were taken into consideration:

- Vulnerable patients who may not be have access or be able to access or afford over the counter medicines
- The ultimate decision about whether to prescribe remains with the GP
- That it is enforced that this is for minor illness not long-term conditions
- This decision must be widely communicated and have GP support.
- More support is given to help patients self-care

The concerns highlighted by patients are broadly covered by the exceptions to the over the counter/ self care guideline.

Please read the full report (Appendix 3) and the associated Self-Care Guideline (Appendix 1, 1a, 1b) for more details.

Next Steps / Options Appraisal

***Option 1: NHS Nottingham City adopt and actively implement the Local Self Care Guidelines to fall into line with NHS Nottingham North and East, Nottingham West and Rushcliffe CCG's
As part of this guideline, local patient information is being developed around self-care.***

Benefits

- Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Partnership align in their guidance
- People within the CCG are encouraged to Self-care, thus empowering them to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing

- NHS funds are used appropriately in the challenging financial climate

Risks

- There is a risk that patients will not self-care and as a result the health of the population worsens
- There is a risk that patients do not self-care and are prescribed more expensive medicines that are not available over the counter

Option 2: NHS Nottingham City do not adopt and therefore do not actively implement the Self Care Guidelines and do not fall in line with NHS Nottingham North and East, Nottingham West and Rushcliffe CCG.

Benefits

- Nottingham City population are prescribed medicines for their minor ailments which are cost effective, but potentially could be bought over the counter.

Risks

- Greater Nottingham Clinical commissioning partnership do not have aligned guidelines
- There is a risk that patients will not self-care and therefore are not empowered to take responsibility for their own health and well-being.
- There is a risk that NHS funds are not used appropriately in the current challenging financial climate.

Note: The Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Executive Group recommended Option 1

Outcome

The Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Executive Group approved option 1, with the caveat that the Clinical Commissioning Executive Group is given further assurance with regards to an implementation plan which includes and how the outcomes will of the decision be measured

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