

Pharmacy & Medicines Directorate

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Primary Care GP Practices
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Date: 29 March, 2023
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Dear Colleague

Withdrawal of COVID Guidance – For Information & Dissemination

Guidance for Repurposing Prescription Only Medicines (POMs) in Care Homes and Hospices during the COVID-19 pandemic V4 (Originally issued May 2020)

Guidance for GP Practices & Care Homes Regarding Supply & Administration of Palliative Medicines During COVID-19 V1.1 (Originally issued April 2020)

Please find updated information regarding the above guidance documents that were operational during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The '**Guidance for Repurposing Prescription Only Medicines (POMs) in Care Homes and Hospices during the COVID-19 pandemic**' was temporary guidance. This national guidance was introduced by NHS Scotland and the Care Inspectorate, to provide a framework for the repurposing of Prescription Only Medicines (POMs), where it was not possible to access medicines for symptom control, in a timely manner, via normal routes within care homes in Scotland.

Whilst this guidance served an essential purpose during the initial COVID-19 outbreak, the repurposing of medicines is not recommended under normal circumstances.

With the protection vaccines have provided against the variants of COVID-19, NHS Scotland and the Care Inspectorate have now made the decision that this guidance is no longer required and will be withdrawn from the 1st of April 2023. Currently, care home residents can access medicines via the normal medicines supply chain.

The '**Guidance for GP Practices & Care Homes Regarding Supply & Administration of Palliative Medicines During COVID-19**' was operational in some care homes across NHS Grampian.

Under exceptional pandemic regulations, care homes with registered nursing staff were able to hold stocks of some Prescription Only Medicines (POMs) for the

immediate treatment of COVID-19. These pandemic regulations are no longer applicable.

There has been no change in the legislation, meaning care homes cannot legally hold stock supplies of Prescription Only Medicines (POMs).

If a resident requires a prescribed medicine they would require to be assessed and prescribed these individually.

Due to the withdrawal of these guidance documents Care homes providers and GP Practice teams are requested to carry out the following actions:

- Ensure all staff in care homes and GP practice/nursing teams are made aware of the withdrawal of these guidance documents from the 1st April 2023.
- Care homes should ensure they are only holding, individually labelled, medicines that have been prescribed for current residents (with the exception of any homely remedies – see below).
- Care homes should review any stocks of Prescription Only Medicines (POMs) they held under the 'Guidance for GP Practices & Care Homes Regarding Supply & Administration of Palliative Medicines During COVID-19'. These medicines should be returned to a community pharmacy for appropriate destruction. Care homes should liaise with their usual community pharmacy to arrange this process with appropriate documentation. This should include any Controlled Drugs no longer required that were being held for repurposing.
- Care homes should discuss with GP Practice(s) and remove any current documentation relating to pre-authorisation of medicines under these guidance documents.

Access to medicines for care home residents:

Care home residents can access medicines via a number of routes. This will be dependent on the condition requiring review and assessment, and the treatment needed. A brief reminder of routes of supply is detailed below:

Homely remedies – NHS Grampian Primary Care Prescribing Group and Excellence in Care Homes Oversight Group are currently finalising an NHS Grampian Homely Remedies Guidance document. This will be shared shortly with care homes and GP Practice teams for discussion and implementation following local agreement.

This will allow care homes to hold a small agreed range of homely remedies – these are medicines that can be purchased, without a prescription and would normally be found in your medicine cabinet at home. Homely remedies would be used for the treatment of minor, self-limiting conditions e.g. headache.

NHS Pharmacy First Scotland – Community pharmacies can provide advice, and when appropriate medicines, for the treatment of minor illnesses. This service is accessible for care home residents, with care home staff acting as the resident's advocate to access this service. Care homes are recommended to discuss

Pharmacy First with their Community Pharmacy and GP Practice to agree on how they can work together. (See attached guidance sheet: NHS Pharmacy First Scotland in the Care Home Setting).

Prescribed Medicines – Care homes and GP practices continue to work closely to ensure the appropriate assessment and prescribing for all residents. GP practices will prescribe repeat and acute medicines for care home residents as normal.

Palliative Care – Care homes and GP practices should continue to review and assess patients that may require medicines for palliative care. Just in Case boxes with prescriptions sheets and the supply of individually labelled medicines should be put in place as appropriate if resident's condition is deteriorating.

Please ensure this information is shared with all relevant colleagues. If you have any queries, please feel free to get in touch gram.mgpg@nhs.scot.

Many thanks



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