

**To: Colleagues Working in the
Substance Misuse Service &
Primary Care Colleagues
Prescribing Opioid Replacement
Therapies**

Date: 2 August, 2024
Your Ref:
Our Ref: DP/LA/SMS_CD_Rx

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Dear Colleague

**Controlled Drug Prescription Duration of Opioid Replacement Therapies (ORT)
Treatment Over 30 days – Advice for Substance Use Services Staff**

This letter offers advice to staff involved in the management of ORT where prescription for treatment periods of longer than thirty days are being considered. The UK Department of Health, and the Scottish Government, have issued a strong recommendation that the maximum quantity of Schedule 2, 3 or 4 Controlled Drugs prescribed should not exceed 30 days. In exceptional circumstances to cover a justifiable clinical need prescriptions can be issued for a longer period, but the reasons for the decision should be recorded in the patient's notes. This is relevant whether or not the prescription is to be dispensed in instalments, consume on the premises or take away and whether the thirty day period is covered by a single prescription or multiple shorter duration prescriptions provided together. In considering whether it is appropriate to prescribe ORT for a period of greater than thirty days, staff should undertake an individual patient risk assessment including:

- The length of time since clinical review
- The current stability of the patient's clinical management plan e.g.
 - No recent changes of medication (drug, form or strength) or doses
 - No recent changes in significant diagnoses or conditions e.g. rapid changes in mental health
 - Likelihood of changes to dosing during the period the prescription will cover are considered to be low
 - Patient does not miss doses/ instalment collections at the pharmacy
 - No recent/regular requirement for re-titration
 - Patient being content with the current dosing for the period of the current prescription
 - Results of bi-annual drug screening as recommended in the 'Orange Book' are available and as expected
- Medicines prescribed for the patient by other prescribers/services to ensure no significant changes in medical conditions or prescribed medications has taken place since the last prescription and thus no new possible drug interactions. Any changes/new medications should be checked for impacts on the safety of opioid replacement therapy (ORT) and appropriateness of its prescription.
- Patient behaviour and social circumstances e.g.
 - Maintains regular contact with keyworker/prescriber
 - Patient in agreement with their care plan

- Patient has a stable living arrangement / not due to move accommodation necessitating a switch in supplying pharmacy

Where such a review is undertaken on behalf of the prescriber it remains the prescriber's responsibility to assure themselves that is safe to prescribe for longer than thirty days.

Yours sincerely



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