Medicines Waste – The Story So Far

With you. For you.
1. Why did the CCG decide to roll out this programme?

The CCG is facing significant financial challenges as never before. We need to deliver £3.883million efficiency savings, whilst meeting the twin challenge of delivering high quality care with an increasingly aging population.

One of the ways with which the CCG can look to make these efficiencies is through tackling the issue of medicines waste. It is estimated that medicines waste cost the NHS in England £300million every year (estimates were calculated in 2009). Within West Lancashire, this equates to £600,000 per year.

At the CCG’s May 2016 monthly GP membership meeting, it was agreed that poor management of ordering and issuing of repeat prescriptions is a safety risk to patients and the cost of these wasted medicines poses a significant risk to the CCG and wider NHS and the need to introduce a programme to tackle this issue was raised.

2. So, this is what we did…

Before we launched our campaign and programme across West Lancashire in November 2016, a lot of work went on behind the scenes to ensure that practices were prepared and ready for this new programme.

Throughout August and September 2016, the CCG’s medicines optimisation team visited each practice in West Lancashire to deliver a training package for all front-line staff on the Electronic Prescribing System (The Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) sends electronic prescriptions from GP surgeries to pharmacies. Eventually EPS will remove the need for most paper prescriptions). This training involved introducing and training all staff on the new Patient Access website and app, which allows patients to not only order repeat prescriptions, but to also book GP appointments and access medical records. The aim of the training, was to make those practice staff most likely to be the first point of contact for patients who may need assistance comfortable enough with the new system to support them and also to make the most of the medicines systems on EMIS Web (EMIS Web is a clinical system for delivering integrated healthcare. It allows healthcare professionals to record, share and use vital information, so they can provide better, more efficient care). This is the system used in all GP surgeries.

This training and preparation paved the way for 1 November 2016, when the CCG’s new programme and campaign for tackling medicines waste ‘Being a Hoarder is Out of Order’ was launched.

The campaign saw a suite of materials released across West Lancashire informing residents of the changes to ordering repeat prescriptions. These included:
These materials were distributed across GP practices, pharmacies and locations throughout West Lancashire. Patients directly affected by this change were also written to directly by practices, to make them aware of the change. All of this was to ensure that we supported our patients and helped them through this transition.

Listening to the feedback, comments and queries from residents was also key, so the CCG launched an online survey to enable people to share their views, as well as getting views via email, phone call and directly through the practices. Every comment was listened to and when any resident contacted the CCG to express concern or to say that they were finding the new process difficult, we liaised directly with them and ensured that whatever initial issues they were facing, that these were resolved.

The CCG also monitored any patients as of 1 October 2016, who had gone a month without ordering a repeat prescription, these patients were then contacted directly to check that they were ok and to find out why they had stopped ordering medication.

**Was anyone exempt from this?**

There are a number of patients in West Lancashire who order a repeat prescription, who are exempt from this new process. These included:

- **Patients on blister packs** – For those patients who may find it difficult to remember what to take and when, through agreement with their GP, they are given blister packs, which are labelled Monday to Sunday with the times that their medicines need to be taken. As those patients were identified as needing support in when to take medicines, it was agreed that changing to ordering their own repeat prescriptions may be too challenging.
- **Repeat dispensing patients** – These are patients with stable, long-term medical conditions whose medicines rarely change who take the same medicine regularly, who are deemed therefore to be at a very low risk of ordering the wrong medication or ordering too much medication and therefore, their current system for ordering medication is considered suitable. This is a practice decision after completing bloods and extensive checks with patients.
- **Palliative care patients** – Those patients who are receiving palliative/end of life care are exempt from the process, to ensure that the NHS supports them and their families and carers in ensuring that they do not add any additional pressures onto them.
- **Housebound patients** – Those patients who are registered as being housebound, with no means of leaving the house and with no carer available to assist them, are also exempt.
- Patients on a learning disability register and those patients aged under 16 are also exempt.

4. Patients Told Us This

To date our online survey has had 12 responses, with 43 patients contacting practices or the CCG directly, members of the public also engaged with the CCG through our Facebook and Twitter pages. The vast majority of these conversations were from patients who were experiencing initial problems using the new system.

Significantly through social media, the CCG was made aware of a patient in West Lancashire who had amassed over £35,000 worth of unused medication at home. The CCG has worked with this patient, to firstly safely dispose of the medication then identify the issues that the patient was facing.

5. So where are we now?

It’s now been more than a year since we launched our new programme to tackle the issue of medicines waste and the data and analytics that we have received have shown some very encouraging results.

- It is estimated that the CCG has seen a reduction of £600,000 in medicine costs, since the introduction of this programme in November 2016. It is important to note though, that this saving is part of a wider programme of work, of which the medicines waste campaign is a key part.
- There was a reduction of seven per cent in the amount of medicine being ordered, which therefore leads to a reduction in medicines waste.
- In relation to West Lancashire residents using Patient Access, since introducing the programme we have seen a 75 per cent increase.
- West Lancashire is now third in the country when it comes to the use of the Electronic Prescribing System (EPS).

These results indicate that our programme for tackling the issue for medicines waste is working and will continue to work.

6. So what next?

We are now re-launching our campaign materials with all new look posters, with the aim of continuing the momentum already built. In addition, we will be looking at areas where there needs to be added focus, such as people within society, such as those who are currently on a nutritional supplement, who may need added support with the programme and we will be working with companies who supply medical appliances such as stoma bags and catheters, so that they are only ordering what the patient requires.

We will be working with care homes, to look at their waste and understand their systems for disposing of medicines when they do not necessarily need to be disposed of.
Finally, we have launched our Prescription Ordering Direct (POD) pilot in Skelmersdale. The POD pilot will enable patients to order medication themselves through a phoneline, in addition to the existing methods currently available. Therefore, making the process of ordering their own medication all the simpler.

If you used the POD and would like to share your feedback, please do so [here](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WLCCGPOD).

In addition to the POD which is based within the Skelmersdale Family Practice in Skelmersdale, plans are underway to open new PODs across practices in West Lancashire in the Spring 2018, with new PODs opening at Manor Primary Care in Skelmersdale and at Stanley Court in Burscough and Burscough Medical Centre.

With the implementation of our POD’s we will be revisiting those patients that we identified as exempt from our medicines waste programme, asking patients to contact the POD for their repeat prescriptions or for the most vulnerable we will make arrangements for us to make contact with them to assist them with ordering their medication.

7. Thank You

The CCG would like to thank NHS Luton CCG for their initial support and guidance when looking to introduce this programme.

We would like to thank all the practice staff and pharmacies who have supported and championed this programme, from embracing the training and new method of ordering repeat prescriptions, to working closely with the CCG to help identify any residents who were facing difficulties in the early days of the programme, so that we could quickly support them.

Finally, we would like to say a massive thank you to all the residents of West Lancashire who have embraced this new method for ordering repeat prescriptions.

Don’t forget you can still have your say on this programme, by completing our online survey, which is available [here](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/9P9N338), by email or call 01695 588 203.