

NHS North Somerset CCG

REPORT TO THE: HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 9TH MARCH 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS TO GLUTEN FREE PRESCRIBING IN NORTH SOMERSET

TOWN OR PARISH: NORTH SOMERSET

PRESENTED BY: TOM GREGORY / DEBBIE CAMPBELL

RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel is asked to consider the report below on NHS North Somerset CCG's proposed changes to arrangements for the prescribing of gluten free food and comment and feedback their views

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

North Somerset CCG are reviewing the current arrangements for gluten free food prescribing, and have published a consultation in order to allow patients and the public to express their views on these proposed changes

2. POLICY

Not applicable

3. DETAILS

The prescribing of gluten free food was introduced approximately 40 years ago when the range of gluten free foods available for general purchase was extremely limited and the cost was significantly higher than that of gluten-containing products.

Recently, the awareness of coeliac disease has increased and the availability and range of foods has increased, and the price has decreased.

North Somerset CCG spent approximately £140,000 on gluten free foods in 2015/16, with approximately 40% of patients with diagnosed coeliac disease receiving these products on prescription.

Patients aged under 18 and over 60 are most likely to receive gluten free food on prescription. In North Somerset, approximately 50% of coeliac patients under 18 and over 60 receive prescriptions for gluten free food, compared to 30% of those between 18 and 60, which may reflect that patients under 18 and over 60 receive free NHS prescriptions

North Somerset, in common with other parts of the UK, is facing a significant increase in demand for all types of local health and care services. This means that health and care budgets are being stretched even further.

In light of the financial pressures currently faced by the NHS there is a need for the CCG to release savings from the prescribing budget where possible. Changes to arrangements for gluten free prescribing have been investigated in other parts of the country, with some CCGs stopping prescribing altogether, some stopping prescribing in adults, and some only prescribing to vulnerable patients (for example those on low income). Areas which have made changes or are in consultation include Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Essex, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Nottingham.

The CCG's preferred option is to stop prescribing gluten free foods to all adults over the age of 18, and to offer only a limited list of "staple foods" such as bread, pasta and flour to those under the age of 18. The reason for continuing to prescribe to under 18s was because of clinical concerns of failure to thrive if children do not adhere to a gluten free diet. Moreover, children are less able than adults to rationalise the need for adherence to a certain diet.

The range of gluten free products in both the large supermarkets and the discount supermarkets has increased significantly. Coeliac UK launched a "gluten free guarantee" in 2014, where supermarkets signed up to ensure that a basket of eight staple items such as fresh white and brown bread, bread rolls, pasta, cereals, flour and crackers were available in all outlets. Two of the major supermarkets are already signed up to this (Asda and Morrisons) with Waitrose, Tesco and Marks & Spencer making significant progress towards meeting this guarantee.

In addition to specially formulated gluten free foods, there is a wide range of staple foods which are naturally gluten free, including rice and potatoes, as well as meat, fish, fruit, vegetables and pulses, all of which are components of a healthy diet.

This work is not being done in isolation; this consultation is in partnership with South Gloucestershire CCG. Gluten free food restrictions have been explored in many other CCGs across England, with decisions made locally in Bath and North East Somerset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall CCGs.

- Somerset CCG have made the decision to make all gluten free food non-formulary and to stop prescribing it
- South Devon and Torbay CCG made the decision to stop all prescribing for patients over 18 and to introduce a limited list of available products for patients under 18
- Northern, Eastern and Western Devon have had a consultation but no decision appears to have been made
- Kernow CCG have decided to stop the prescribing of all gluten free foods by GPs and to stop supplying directly through pharmacies
- Bath and North East Somerset have made a decision that they will no longer prescribe gluten free food other than to vulnerable patient groups

No decision has been taken so far, we want to hear people's views on the proposed change, whether they live with coeliac disease or not before agreeing any changes. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been used to inform the consultation process. The conclusion of the EIA was that this proposed guidance did not discriminate any groups with protected characteristics as it applies to all adults.

4. CONSULTATION

Consultation opened on 13th February 2017 and is available until the 17th March 2017
Stakeholders consulted include;

- GPs and GP practice staff
- Community Pharmacies
- Secondary care clinicians, e.g. gastroenterologists and dieticians
- MPs
- Parish and town councils
- Councillor groups
- North Somerset Council Public Health
- Patient Participation Groups
- Healthwatch North Somerset
- Avon LPC (Local Pharmaceutical Committee) and LMC (Local Medical Committee)
- Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership
- North Somerset libraries
- Age UK and Age Concern
- Community transport services
- North Somerset Community Partnership
- Community care agencies
- One Care Consortium
- Coeliac UK

The consultation is available from the North Somerset CCG website:
<https://www.northsomersetccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/gf-food/>

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs will be met from existing resources

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risks are identified as the project evolves

7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed (Appendix 1)

8. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

This paper explains the rationale for our preferred option.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment