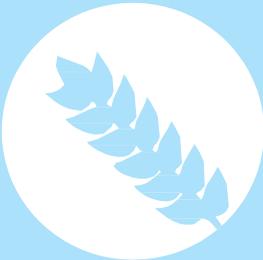


Gluten-free foods and OTC medicines



Your views on proposed changes to the future provision of Gluten-Free foods and Over the Counter (OTC) medicines.

Background

Who are we?

Luton Clinical Commissioning Group (LCCG) is the local NHS organisation responsible for planning, organising and buying NHS-funded healthcare for the 240,000 people who live in Luton. This includes: hospital services, community health services and mental health services.

LCCG is run by GPs, nurses, hospital doctors and other clinicians - the people you see whenever you come into contact with the NHS. All 28 GP practices in Luton are members of the CCG.

In 2017-2018, LCCG had a budget of **£271 million** to spend on healthcare services specifically for Luton.

What is this document about?

The NHS receives a fixed budget to buy and provide health services for the entire local population. Here in Luton we serve 240,000 residents with a budget of £271m. When commissioning (buying) health services we do so specifically for the health needs which have been identified locally for our population. We make decisions about which health services to purchase, based on these identified needs.

Like all CCGs up and down the country, we are in the position of having more demand on our budget than we have the budget to spend.

The challenge faced by all organisations across the NHS is how to spend the available budget in ways that most benefit the health of the whole population and delivers good value for money. LCCG is a financially challenged organisation. Luton has a growing population, a limited budget and a growing demand for all types of healthcare services, as well as a financial deficit it needs to clear. LCCG has to evaluate every service that it commissions to see if it offers good quality, good outcomes, good value for money and also whether it is an effective and equitable way of allocating our resources for the benefit of the whole population.

What has LCCG already done?

LCCG has already introduced schemes which have had positive quality impacts while also providing cost-savings.

LCCG now has some more difficult decisions to make about the prioritisation of funds for 2018 and beyond.

Luton CCG is proposing two key changes:

1

To stop providing gluten-free foods on prescription.

2

To stop providing over-the-counter (OTC) medicines on prescription for short term, minor conditions.

In this document, we will explain why we want to make these changes and how you can tell us your views on the proposals.

Gluten-free foods

The case for change

Gluten is a type of protein that is found in three types of cereal - wheat, barley and rye. A gluten-free diet is recommended for people who have been clinically diagnosed with coeliac disease. Gluten can cause symptoms that include bloating, diarrhoea, nausea, tiredness and headaches.

Certain foods are naturally gluten-free such as meat, vegetables, cheese, potatoes and rice. Gluten-free alternatives for those foods that do traditionally contain gluten, such as bread and pasta, are available to those who wish to continue to eat similar foods which contain the cereals described.

There is no cure for coeliac disease, but switching to a gluten-free diet will help control symptoms.

A decision was taken over 30 years ago to include gluten-free foods on prescription, when there was limited availability of gluten-free foods to buy. Today the availability of gluten-free foods has increased dramatically and they are found in almost all major supermarkets.

Health experts say that as a protein, gluten is not essential to people's diets and can be replaced by other foods. There is a lot of information available to patients via their GP, dietitian or available online about how to eat a healthy gluten-free diet.

Foods currently available include bread/rolls, bread mixes, crackers, pasta, pizza bases, breakfast cereals and oats.

What is the cost of gluten-free products to LCCG?

Last year Luton CCG spent £80,000 on gluten-free food. If this service stopped then potentially, we could reinvest £80,000 into other health services in Luton, depending on local needs.

The Proposal: To stop providing gluten-free foods on prescription.

Over the counter medicines (OTC)

The case for change

Over the counter medicines refers to the types of medicines that can literally be bought over the counter because they are deemed safe enough for people to self-manage common and minor ailments. These are medicines such as painkillers, cough and cold remedies, antihistamines, and some skincare products for conditions described as 'self-limiting' - i.e. the condition will improve on its own. They do not include any medicines that are available by prescription only, such as antibiotics, statins etc.

It is estimated that there are 57 million GP consultations for minor ailments each year, costing the NHS approximately £2 billion. In many cases people can take care of their minor ailments by using their community pharmacists, reducing the number of valuable GP consultations and enabling GPs to focus on caring for more poorly patients.

Giving people greater control over their own health treatments and encouraging healthy day-to-day behaviours that help prevent ill health in the long term will give patients the confidence and information to look after themselves at home when they can, and visit the GP only when they need to.

The case for self-care and over the counter medication is further strengthened by the excellent service offered by community pharmacists, which include long opening hours and seven day opening, all of which provide great access for patients in their local communities. The information available on NHS Choices is also extensive and assists patients to self-care.

Where a treatment is needed for a long-term chronic condition or there are legal restrictions on the amount of medicine that can be purchased over the counter, then the patient's regular clinician will still be able to prescribe.

What is the cost of over the counter medicines to LCCG?

LCCG currently spends over £1million a year paying for widely available, over the counter medicines. If we are able to reduce even 50% of these costs, LCCG could reinvest £500,000 per year into other health services.

LCCG believe that by encouraging patients to self-care and buy over the counter medicines, we can make better use of valuable GP time.

The Proposal: To stop providing over the counter (OTC) medicines on prescription for short term, minor conditions.

Individual Funding Request (IFR) Process

For all of the above proposals it should be noted that the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process is still available for individual patients in exceptional clinical circumstances.

Any application needs to be made on behalf of the patient by a clinician, and the key point to remember is the need to demonstrate the exceptionality of the case i.e. why the patient should receive treatment which is outside LCCG's current funding arrangements.

Further information can be found on LCCG's website: www.lutonccg.nhs.uk

How can I give you my views?

Please complete the accompanying questionnaire in this leaflet and post back to us by ~~freepost~~ (no stamp needed).

Alternatively, you can complete the questionnaire online at:

www.lutonccg.nhs.uk

The formal consultation process commences on 25 September 2017 and ends on 24 December 2017.

LCCG will collate and consider all responses to this consultation before making a decision on whether or not to make any changes to the prescribing of gluten-free foods and OTC medicines. A report on the findings will be available on the website in the New Year.