

PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release

11 June 2018

Have your say on a new approach to gluten-free prescribing

Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is reviewing its policy on prescribing gluten-free foods in line with national guidance and is encouraging Wiltshire patients, the public and clinicians to have their say on two proposed options.

The review follows a national public consultation in 2017 by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on the ‘Availability of gluten-free foods on NHS Prescription’ and the resulting guidance announced in February 2018 to restrict gluten-free foods to bread and mixes only – although this does not affect a CCG’s statutory authority to determine its approach at a local level.

Gluten-free prescribing began in the 1960s when no gluten-free foods or products were readily available. Today gluten-free foods are found in most supermarkets, shops and many cafes - including in Wiltshire – and competition has driven pricing down meaning they are affordable dietary alternatives.

Wiltshire CCG has a duty to ensure that the funds it has available for prescribing are spent in a way that benefits most patients. Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 it spent £241,487 on products such as gluten-free bread, pasta and pizza bases, items which are now readily available and competitively priced. Wiltshire is also the highest prescribing CCG in England of Juvela gluten-free bread and bread mix.

Dr Richard Sandford-Hill, Chair of Wiltshire CCG explains, “The two options proposed are to stop prescribing all gluten-free foods in primary care, or to restrict prescribing to bread and mixes only for those patients with a diagnosis of coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis up to the age of 18 years.

“While these proposals will reduce the amount of staple gluten-free foods available on prescription in Wiltshire, it will not affect the vital help and support available to patients diagnosed with coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis via their GP or dietician.

There is also no strong clinical evidence that patients who receive gluten-free food on prescription are more likely to comply with a gluten-free diet, or have better health outcomes than those who do not.”

Patients, the public and clinicians in Wiltshire are encouraged to have their say on the proposed options via a short survey available at www.wilthsireccg.nhs.uk. The survey is open until 22 July 2018.

Findings from the survey will inform the future prescribing of gluten-free foods in Wiltshire.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

- Dr Richard Sandford-Hill is available for interview as follows:
 - Tuesday 12 June, 4.30-5pm
 - Thursday 14 June, 1.30-2.30pm
- NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the commissioner of health care services for the population of Wiltshire. The CCG is led by local GPs who have first-hand experience of what their patients need.
- The CCG consists of 49 GP member practices and works closely with local partners including Wiltshire Council, local NHS providers, patients and the public to manage existing NHS services and implement new services to ensure that high quality health and social care is delivered to the population as close to their home as possible.
- More information can be found at www.wiltshireccg.nhs.uk

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