

Policy on Shared Care Prescribing Arrangements

Introduction

The aims of The Chipping Surgery policy on shared care arrangements are to support patients to access care safely and to ensure that we comply with national and local guidance on prescribing governance.

Shared care in this context refers to prospective arrangements with other providers for a patient's ongoing management. NHS England defines shared care as:

“a particular form of the transfer of clinical responsibility from a hospital or specialist service to general practice in which prescribing by the GP¹, or other primary care prescriber, is supported by a shared care agreement”. (NHS England, 2018)

Background

Safe Clinical Care

Shared care arrangements are required to manage prescribing risks, such as when a treatment:

- Is not routinely prescribed in primary care and/or
- Requires specialist initiation and/or monitoring

To mitigate risks when such drugs are prescribed in primary care, NHS England stipulates that local policies must be in place to support safe prescribing. These policies take the form of locally agreed guidelines:

“Shared Care Prescribing Guidelines are local policies to enable General Practitioners to accept responsibility for the prescribing and monitoring of medicines/treatments in primary care, in agreement with the initiating specialist service.” (NHS England, 2018)

Robust governance processes are required to draw up these local policies, typically involving providers and commissioners, as well as the LMC and the Area Prescribing Committee, to ensure clinical safety and coherence with local and national guidance.

“When drawing up shared care agreements...it may be necessary for local discussion to take place between hospitals, commissioners, the Area Prescribing Committee, and the relevant Local Medical Committees (LMCs) as a prelude to establishing agreement with individual GPs. GPs would only be obliged to provide treatment consistent with current contract requirements.” (NHS England, 2018)

Without a robust local agreement of this type, GP cannot safely enter into shared care arrangements:

“It is of the utmost importance that the GP feels clinically competent to prescribe the necessary medicines. It is therefore essential that a transfer involving medicines with which GPs would not normally be familiar should not take place without full local agreement.” (NHS England, 2018)

¹ For brevity, this policy refers to GPs but applies to all primary care prescribers who work for The Chipping Surgery, either as employees or self-employed contractors.

Prescriber responsibility

A robust shared care agreement at locality level is a pre-requisite for a primary care clinician to prescribe but, even when such an agreement is in place in Gloucestershire, the prescriber remains responsible for ensuring that s/he is competent to prescribe. The GMC stipulates that:

“If you share responsibility for a patient’s care with a colleague, you must be competent to exercise your share of clinical responsibility. You should:

- a. keep yourself informed about the medicines that are prescribed for the patient*
- b. be able to recognise serious and frequently occurring adverse side effects*
- c. make sure appropriate clinical monitoring arrangements are in place and that the patient and healthcare professionals involved understand them*
- d. keep up to date with relevant guidance on the use of the medicines and on the management of the patient’s condition.”* (General Medical Council, 2021)

The Chipping Surgery Policy

The Chipping Surgery will comply with the guidance of the GMC and NHS England on shared care arrangements.

The Chipping Surgery supports the implementation of shared care arrangements that have been agreed at Gloucestershire ICS level, with the support of the LMC, provided that our clinicians feel competent to prescribe the drug in question safely.

In the event of there being a shared care arrangement agreed at Gloucestershire ICS level, but none of The Chipping Surgery prescribers feels competent to prescribe the drug concerned, we will ensure that the specialist is made aware of this, so that the patient can continue to access the drug.

In the interests of patient safety and to comply with the NHS England standards outlined in “Responsibility for Prescribing between Primary and Secondary/Tertiary Care, 2018”, THE CHIPPING SURGERY is not able to participate in shared care arrangements unless there is a shared care arrangement agreed at Gloucestershire ICS level.

References

General Medical Council. (2021). *Good Medical Practice*. General Medical Council.

NHS England. (2018). *Responsibility for Prescribing between Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Care*. NHS England.

Flowchart for Shared Care Prescribing Requests

