

**NHS St Helens CCG Gluten Free Food Prescribing Policy**

<b>Version</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>1.2.17</b>
<b>Review Date</b>	<b>5.6.22</b>
<b>Approved By</b>	<b>St Helens CCG Quality Committee</b>
<b>Approval Date</b>	

**REVISIONS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>	<b>Approved By</b>
6.12.16	Appendix 1	<b>Addition of CCG financial challenge</b>	
5.6.20	1, 4, appendix 1	<p><b>Full review</b></p> <p><b>Removal of</b> 1.1 NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group currently spends approximately £103k annually on the prescribing of gluten free (GF) food.</p> <p><b>Removal of</b> 4.3 and recorded within the CCG Financial Recovery Plan.</p> <p><b>Amendment</b> NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is a membership organisation led by 35 GP practices to 34 practices</p> <p><b>Removal of</b> In St Helens we have a big financial challenge to meet in the short term. The CCG has a savings plan of £20.5million to achieve this year and a further £18.1 million to be saved in 2017/18 in order to balance the budget. To address this we need to find ways of reducing costs in some areas in order to protect other essential services. These products – which include flour, bread, pasta, biscuits and pizza base mix – were added to the list of products available on prescription when they were not easily available to buy locally</p> <p><b>Addition of</b> 3.4 In November 2018, the legislation for the prescribing of gluten-free (GF) food was revised. Revised prescribing regulations allow for ‘a maximum of GF bread and mixes only to be prescribed at NHS expense. CCGs can restrict further by selecting bread only, mixes only or can choose to end prescribing of all GF foods if they feel this is appropriate for their population’</p>	

		<b>Update</b> Appendix 2 Reference to the PrescQIPP bulletin	
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<b>POLICY OBSOLETE</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Approved By</b>

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy, for example a patient is underweight and / or presents with ongoing symptoms attributable to their condition they will be referred to a dietician for education and dietary advice which will include alternatives to gluten free products that are available on prescription.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Patients with gluten-sensitive enteropathy, including coeliac disease, should follow a strict gluten free (GF) diet.

1.2 Prescribing costs of GF food are expected to increase annually as increasing numbers of patients are diagnosed with gluten-sensitive enteropathy. There is also pressure on clinicians to prescribe GF foods for patients with other conditions that are not covered by NHS exemptions.

1.3 GF food is expensive when obtained via NHS prescription, and is considerably more costly than the price of purchasing GF food. GF foods are available in supermarkets with a wide variety of choice. In some supermarkets GF staple foods e.g. bread and flour are more expensive than equivalent gluten containing items. However, many coeliac patients can alter their diet to replace bread with naturally gluten-free foods e.g. rice, potato.

## **2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY**

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the decision taken by NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group to stop all prescribing of GF food (unless exceptional circumstances exist) and to support prescribers to implement this decision.

2.2 This policy will ensure equity of service for all residents of St Helens and will allow the same expectation of what will be provided from the GP Practice or other services.

2.3 This policy applies to all services contracted by or delivered by the NHS across St Helens CCG including:

- a) GP Practices – GPs and any other Prescribers
- b) Out of hours and extended hours providers
- c) Acute Hospitals
- d) Out-Patient Clinics
- e) NHS Community Providers
- f) Independent providers
- g) Community pharmacies

2.4 This policy applies to all people (adults and children) who are registered with a GP in St Helens (permanent or temporary resident) or who access a NHS service in St Helens.

### **3. GLUTEN FREE FOOD PRESCRIBING**

3.1 NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group will not fund the prescribing of GF foods in St Helens for any patient.

3.2 The current arrangement for patients to be supported with advice from the Dietetics teams will continue.

3.3 Patients will be expected to purchase GF foods if required. Patients should be signposted to appropriate sources of information on maintaining a healthy gluten-free diet.

3.4 In November 2018, the legislation for the prescribing of gluten-free (GF) food was revised. Revised prescribing regulations allow for 'a maximum of GF bread and mixes only to be prescribed at NHS expense. CCGs can restrict further by selecting bread only, mixes only or can choose to end prescribing of all GF foods if they feel this is appropriate for their population'.

### **4. MONITORING PRESCRIBING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: GF FOOD PRESCRIBING REVIEW**

4.1 NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group has a duty to ensure that the local NHS budget is spent in an appropriate way.

4.2 The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that all agreed actions are carried out by healthcare professionals according to this policy.

4.3 Implementation of the policy will be monitored via ePACT data and recorded within the CCG Financial Recovery Plan.

## Appendix 1.

- Patient letter and information sheet (to be issued by GP Practices to all registered patients affected by the decision) - to include arrangements for re-imburement of pre-payment certificates, contact details for concerns, patient advice eg. Eatwell plate ([The Eatwell Guide - Live Well - NHS Choices](#)), [Gluten-free checklist - Coeliac UK](#), Coeliac UK food and drink directory (available to coeliac UK members only), Coeliac UK GF food checker mobile app , arrangements for ongoing education and support.

Dear Sir/ Madam

## **Gluten Free Food**

NHS St Helens Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is a membership organisation led by 34 GP practices, responsible for planning and buying healthcare services for the local population. Like many CCG's across the country, we are in a position of having more demand on services than can be commissioned from the available budget.

One of the areas that has been identified by the Clinical Commissioning Group is the prescribing of Gluten Free products which are provided to patients on prescription.

These products are widely available from supermarkets and are sold to the public at prices that are considerably lower than the NHS is charged when bought for use on prescription. There are also many other alternative sources of carbohydrate that do not contain gluten, for example rice and potato.

The Clinical Commissioning Group has asked your GP practice to send you this letter because you currently receive Gluten Free food on prescription and following a 10 week public consultation, it was decided that from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 we will no longer provide these products on prescription.

Should you require more information about this, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Interim Clinical Chief Executive  
St Helens CCG

## **Appendix 2. References/resources and associated documents**

Prescribing for clinical need and gluten-free foods policy. Heywood Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group.

Guidance on the prescribing of gluten-free foods. PrescQIPP. Bulletin Nov 2019  
Available at

<https://www.prescqipp.info/umbraco/surface/authorisedmediasurface/index?url=%2fmedia%2f4489%2f225-gluten-free-20.pdf> Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020

### **Acknowledgements:**

Medicines Management Team, West Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Medicines Management Team, Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group.

Medicines Management Team, North Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group.