

Medicines re-use scheme for care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

(These FAQs should be read in combination with the OCCG Guidance on running a medicines re-use scheme in the care home setting). The guidance can be found on the MOCH webpage (scroll down to the bottom of the page) <https://www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk/professional-resources/medicines-care-homes.htm>

1. What are the scenarios where medicines can be re-used?

Medicines should only be re-used in a crisis situation, if the benefits for the individual outweigh the risks

During the Covid-19 pandemic, medicines should still be obtained in the usual way i.e. via prescription and dispensed for the individual by a community pharmacy or dispensing doctor. Medicines should only be re-used if the situation is an emergency e.g.

- the pharmacy is out of stock and unable to supply the prescribed medication within an appropriate time frame **and** there is no appropriate alternative **or**
- the medicines are unable to be obtained via the conventional route due to the immediate needs of an individual patient e.g. where a resident has reached end of life and requires urgent symptom control.

2. When does the medicines re-use scheme apply?

This scheme applies from 28th April 2020 until the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. Does a care home have to participate in this scheme?

NO. An individual care home can choose whether to take part although participation is actively encouraged by both the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the NHS.

4. How should care homes incorporate the medicines re-use scheme within their medicines policy?

Care homes that choose to operate the scheme **must** update their local medicines management policy to include the Medicines re-use guidance for the duration of the current emergency.

5. Does permission need to be sought to re-use a patient's medicines?

Ideally a resident's permission should be sought although this is not essential. It has been suggested that care homes proactively seek written permission (See **Form 1** for sample letter) from all residents (or the person who has Power of Attorney if the resident lacks capacity or the Next of Kin if the person is deceased) for;

- their medicines to be made available for other residents, if they are no longer needed.
- them to receive a re-used medicine, if the supply of their medicine is interrupted or a newly prescribed medicine is unavailable in a timely manner and if it is deemed safe for re-use

Although seeking permission from the resident is not essential, it is recommended that if permission is not sought, this is documented along with the reason.

6. Can all medicines which are no longer required by a resident, be re-used?

NO. Whilst any type of medicine can be considered for re-use e.g. tablets, capsules, liquids, injections, creams and inhalers, there are strict criteria which must be adhered to (see questions below and refer to **Form 2** in the guidance document). Care homes should also consider the safety and practical aspects around storing additional medicines and should only keep medicines to be re-used if it is safe to do so. Care homes must not stockpile medicines. Consideration should be given to prioritising which medicines to keep for re-use, for example;

- medicines which may be required urgently e.g. end of life/anticipatory medicines
- medicines which may be in high demand during the pandemic e.g. end of life medicines, paracetamol, antibiotics
- medicines where problems with availability have been experienced, communicated by the CCG Medicines Optimisation team or Primary Care network.

7. Can a blister strip be approved for re-use if a dose has been removed?

NO. If one or more doses have been removed from a blister strip, the remainder of the strip should be discarded. If the blister strip is untouched, even though it is in an un-sealed packet, then it can be considered for re-use providing it matches the description on the packaging including the name, strength, formulation, batch number, expiry date.

8. Can an open pack of ampoules be considered for re-use?

YES. An open pack of intact ampoules may be considered for re-use providing that the details on each ampoule matches those on the outer packaging including name, strength, batch number and expiry date.

9. Can medicines be assessed for re-use before they are needed?

YES. It is advised that medicines for re-use are proactively assessed prior to them being needed in an emergency. This means that there will be more time to assess them properly and obtain approval from a Healthcare professional (HCP) if none on-site. It will also help avoid stockpiling of medicines which are not required.

10. Does a medicine need to be approved by a HCP before re-use?

Care homes with nursing - the medicines should be approved for re-use by nurses within the team.

Residential homes without nursing - the medicines for re-use may be approved by external registered healthcare professionals. Approval may be given remotely. Please see page 13 of the guidelines for contact details. **Please note that the Oxford Health On-call Pharmacist should only be contacted in an emergency** i.e. if it is likely that the approved medicine will be re-used imminently. Otherwise please defer approval until the MOCH team is available.

11. How should medicines to be re-used be stored?

Medicines to be re-used should be stored in the usual manner according to the manufacturers requirements e.g. in the medicines' cupboard, refrigerator or CD cupboard but they should be very clearly separated from other medicines, in a different area where possible, in a sealed container labelled appropriately e.g. '*Patient returns – approved for re-use during the Covid-19 pandemic*'. Medicines approved for re-use should be checked regularly to ensure that they are in-date and that not too many of the same medicine is being accumulated.

12. Are any measures required to minimise the risk of cross-contamination?

YES. If the medicine is from a patient with symptoms or a diagnosis of Covid-19, it should be double bagged, sealed and quarantined for 5 days, as per guidance from the [Royal Pharmaceutical Society](#), prior to assessment for re-use. A label should be attached to the bag stating '*Quarantined onDo not use before*' and the bag should be stored safely away from other medicines in a separate storage area.

13. Is a prescription required before a re-used medicine is given to another resident?

YES. Unless the medicine is being supplied under a Patient Group Direction (PGD) or Patient Specific Direction (PSD) **a prescription is required** and must be obtained prior to administration to a new patient. If a prescription has been issued to the pharmacy, then the prescription (or prescription token) can be shared with the care home either electronically or hard copy and annotated “*Not dispensed - stock supplied as per medicines re-use scheme for Covid-19 pandemic.*” A copy of the prescription should be kept with the resident’s care plan.

14. Should the re-used medication be added to the MAR chart?

YES. The MAR chart should be updated either by the pharmacy or the care home staff, in-line with the directions from the prescriber and a copy of the prescription should be retained with the resident’s care plan. If the MAR chart is handwritten by the care home staff, it should be checked for accuracy and signed by a second trained member of staff, in-line with the medicines policy, before it is used. The prescriber does not need to sign the MAR chart.

15. How do I record when a re-used medication is in use?

A record must be made on **Form 3** of each administration of the re-used medicine (and in the CD register for CDs) as well as on the MAR chart of the resident that it is administered to.

16. Are care homes required to keep documentation relating to the medicines re-use scheme?

Any documentation related to the scheme must be kept by the care provider for the duration appropriate for health records.

17. Can medicines for re-use be transferred to other care homes?

NO. Medicines for re-use must remain within a single care home and not transferred to another care home, even within the same parent organisation.

18. Who should be contacted with questions re the medicines’ re-use scheme?

The **Medicines Optimisation in Care Homes (MOCH)** team can be contacted

Monday – Friday (excl. BH)

09:00 – 17:00

medicines.care-homes@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk