<GP Practice Header>

<Todays date>

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

<Patient name>

<Patient address>

Dear <Patient name>

We are writing to you with respect to your opioid prescription for [Free Text Prompt]

Over the past 10-15 years it has become clear that opioids are not the safe and effective treatment for chronic (lasting more than a few months) non-cancer pain that was first thought. We now know that, although opioids are good at reducing short term pain and pain in terminally ill patients, there is little evidence that opioids taken long-term help to reduce pain in patients with persistent non-cancer pain nor improve the quality of their life and how daily activities are carried out. There is now a better understanding of the risks, including:

* reduced fertility
* low sex drive
* irregular periods
* erectile dysfunction in men (the inability to keep an erection)
* reduced ability to fight infection
* increased levels of pain
* dependence (if you use stop taking or lower the dose too quickly you can get symptoms of withdrawal
* breathing issues (respiratory depression)
* opioid-related deaths.

We enclose some information which you might find useful.

We are starting to reduce our patients who are on long-term painkillers and we would like to offer support for you to reduce the amount you take. This is particularly for individuals who are taking more than what is now considered to be a safe amount.

Following on from our original letter, for safety reasons we consider it necessary to start slowly reducing the dose of opioid medication prescribed to you. This will start with your next prescription. Please see the reduction schedule attached.

Many people find that they can reduce their opioid dose without more pain. As fewer side effects occur, quality and enjoyment of life can also improve. There are also other services we can refer you to for support if necessary.

If you have any queries, please make an appointment with your GP and bring this letter with you to the consultation.

Yours Sincerely<Doctors name>

Enc: Reduction planBritish Pain Society Understanding and Managing Long-term Pain:

<https://www.britishpainsociety.org/static/uploads/resources/files/book_understanding_pain.pdf> (you can request a free hard copy by contacting the secretariat, leaving a postal address on 0207 269 7840 or emailing it to info@britishpainsociety.org).