

Medicine Matters

Covid-19 Special Bulletin (3)

North of England
Commissioning Support
Spring 2020

Medicines information for care staff in care homes

Communication

In the unusual and rapidly-changing working environment as a result of the management of COVID-19, it is more important than ever to ensure that effective methods of communication are maintained – both at the point of transfer of care, and also within services.

So often errors / incidents are perpetuated with poor communication within teams or across healthcare services

Transfer of care provider

As the situation continues to develop, there will be an increase in admissions to and discharges from hospital – some may be your own residents, but when a service has capacity, they may be asked to admit people who require support and are new to the service.

Similarly, domiciliary care services may be requested to temporarily provide support for a person previously unknown to them who may or may not require support with their medicines.

Admission to hospital from your service:

Make sure you share key information about the person to the hospital. This may include:

- A copy of the medicines administration record (MAR) chart including details of known allergies
- Moving and handling requirements
- Dietary needs – are food and fluids modified?
- Any other relevant information such as specific medicine or behaviour care plans

Discharge from hospital:

Ensure you have all necessary information regarding the usual medicines the person takes which will normally be provided in the discharge information.

Ensure that medicines provided on discharge and supporting information are thoroughly checked (reconciled) on admission or return to the home.

This should be documented to include the following:

- details of when reconciliation is carried out
- who was involved
- details and evidence of discussions and outcomes regarding any discrepancies

Medicines supplied by hospital will likely be provided in 'boxes and bottles', which may not be the way that your medicines are usually provided, and will not come with a MAR chart. Please use these medicines rather than ordering

a replacement prescription and wasting medicines. Doses for administration should be prepared in the usual way using the instructions on the medication labels and any supporting information provided on discharge.

See page 2 for further information regarding how digital technology is helping how we transfer information

Effective Handover

Good communication between teams and shift groups will be increasingly important during the duration of the current pandemic as both staff and the people they look after are potentially affected both regarding their health and wellbeing. You may find your service increasingly reliant on the use of staff from other homes or agency staff due to illness or isolation amongst the permanent team. Effective handover procedures are the key to ensuring essential information, including that about medicines is shared with all relevant staff and effectively passed from one shift to another.

Some things to consider:

- Ensure there is clear guidance detailing how people are usually supported with their medicines
- Prepare protocols to support the use of as required medicines – this will ensure consistency
- Evidence the handover process to ensure all important information is clearly documented and not just shared verbally

Delegating medicine related tasks

As providers respond to COVID-19, there is likely to be an increase in delegated tasks.

It is important to recognise that staff will need extra training and competency checks before undertaking these tasks and that there must be robust person-centered care plans in place which support care workers to identify when and where to escalate concerns about a person's care.

Updated information on delegating medicines administration has been published by Care Quality Commission to set out the key principles and responsibilities to consider:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/delegating-medicines-administration>

The Medicines Optimisation Website

Information, guidance documents and various medicine related tools are accessible via our website. These can be downloaded and many may be adjusted to suit your needs. **NECS Medicines Optimisation website:**

<https://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/category/resources/care-homes/>

Digital technology

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, secure communications between health and social care services are more important than ever. The roll out of NHS mail is currently being fast tracked to the care sector to improve connectivity; it will help to ensure that the people we care for remain in the most appropriate environment whilst receiving the most effective care.

Uptake of this process has been particularly successful in the North East and many care homes will already be enabled and starting to use the system.

NHS Mail is an accredited mail system that conforms to data security requirements. NOTE: a number of care homes and other services may have alternative secure mail – please check with your IT support provider or NHS Digital if you are unsure.

As many other healthcare services also have access to NHS mail including GP practices, Community Pharmacies and Hospitals, NHS mail and secure accredited mail accounts will provide a number of significant advantages:

- Sensitive information can be shared seamlessly and securely across health and social care organisations
- NHS mail allows access to 1.5 million Allied Health Professionals through a global directory (accredited mail accounts and domains not included)
- Enhanced prescription ordering process with GP and pharmacy; fewer lost or missing prescriptions
- Easier access to results
- Fewer phone calls
- Reduced postage costs
- There's an accurate audit trail to refer back to

New helpline providing digital support to social care providers

Digital Social Care has launched a free helpline to support adult social care providers with the rapid uptake in technology necessitated by COVID-19.

The helpdesk can support providers on a range of topics including NHS mail, how technology can be used to keep people in contact with friends and family, how technology can be used for recruitment and the implementation of remote consultations with primary and acute care.

Alongside answering queries, Digital Social Care will also be collecting feedback from the helpline to collate and share best practice on how technology is being used in the sector. The helpline is available Monday-Friday, from 9am-5pm on 0208 133 3430 or help@digitalsocialcare.co.uk

Alternative contact for NE / NW and Yorkshire:
england.dsptnorth@nhs.net

“Axe the Fax”

Traditionally fax machines have been used by care homes as the primary way to communicate between GP surgeries and community pharmacies. As of 31st March 2020, fax machines should no longer be used, and both care homes and community pharmacies are encouraged to use NHS Mail as a secure way to transfer patient confidential information.

Useful information

CQC have added a new information resource to their medicines information for adult social care services to highlight current issues regarding Covid-19. This page is frequently updated to reflect ongoing issues.

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/medicines-information-adult-social-care-services#coronavirus>

Information about NHS mail and secure information sharing:
<https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhsmail#about-nhsmail>

Note from the Medicine Optimisation Team: we intend to produce further guidance bulletins in response to common questions arising regarding medicines in care homes or other social care settings

Please continue to refer to current guidance UK government guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

If you have any questions regarding this newsletter or if you have an idea for an article to be included in a future issue, please contact us on Tel: 0191 2172558 where you will be forwarded to the most appropriate member of the team

Please don't forget to share this newsletter with your colleagues!