

Review of dispensing GP practices

Introduction

For the vast majority of patients in NHS Grampian, medicines are prescribed by GPs and dispensed by Community Pharmacists (local pharmacies).

Where patients have a serious difficulty of access to a pharmacy the NHS Board can require the patient's GP to provide the dispensed medicines direct to the patient. NHS Grampian requires nine GP practices to dispense for their patients. In some practices the Board requires the GP to dispense to all patients, whilst in others the Board has defined a geographical boundary where patients living beyond a set distance from the practice can get their dispensed medicines from their practice.

These arrangements operate under the regulations governing General Medical Services. The NHS Board is only legally allowed to require a patient's GP practice to supply medicines and appliances where it has been formally agreed that the patient will have a serious difficulty in obtaining such medicines or appliances (other than scheduled drugs) from a community pharmacist.

The term serious difficulty is not defined but the Board can consider the distance to the nearest community pharmacy, issues of communication and other exceptional circumstances.

The NHS Grampian Board has agreed to the proposed review for six dispensing practices in Grampian. These are Rhynie, Portlethen, Skene, Gardenstown, Udney Station and Auchenblae.

If you are a patient who currently gets, or is eligible to get, your dispensed medicines from one of these GP practices NHS Grampian would like to hear from you. There is a feedback form attached to the end of this information sheet.

The closing date for responses is 1 October 2016.

Why is NHS Grampian reviewing dispensing arrangements at these practices?

The review has been triggered by the need to make sure that the Board is continuing to act legally in requiring these GP Practices to dispense for their patients. The Board can only legally require a practice to dispense for patients who have a serious difficulty in accessing prescribed medicines and appliances from a pharmacy.

A previous Board decision, relating to dispensing by the Haddo Medical Group, was criticised because the Board had required the Practice to dispense for patients living in and around Pitmedden, in part because it recognised that only a proportion of that community would have a serious difficulty of access, but had required dispensing for them all. If the Board doesn't review its requirement for these practices to dispense it is anticipated that NHS Grampian will be challenged in Court. NHS Grampian needs to assure itself that it is operating within its legal authority i.e. only requiring GPs to dispense for patients that it has defined as having a serious difficulty of access to a pharmacy. By undertaking this review and re-affirming any

requirement to dispense the Board can discharge its responsibilities appropriately and GP Practices and the populations they serve can be clear about how dispensed medicines will be provided in the future, hopefully without fear of legal challenge and the disruption such challenges can bring.

Why has NHS Grampian excluded the Practices at Tomintoul, Glenlivet and Strathdon from the review?

Strathdon, Tomintoul and Glenlivet probably represent the most remote and rural practices in Grampian. The recommendation of the Primary Care Integrated Management Group, which had taken advice from both the GP Sub Committee and the Area Pharmaceutical Committee of NHS Grampian, was to recognise that the communities served by these practices share a common serious difficulty of access to community pharmacy based on the distance to the nearest pharmacy.

In accepting that all of the patients, living within the practice boundaries of these three practices have a serious difficulty of access NHS Grampian can legally require these practices to continue dispensing for their patients.

If a GP practice can no longer dispense medicines and appliances, won't this affect their income?

Income related to dispensing by GP Practices is meant to cover the costs of providing the service. However, it has been widely recognised that for some practices the income from dispensing has been used to cross-subsidise other medical services e.g. the ability to support satellite surgeries or employ additional staff. The review will look at how the financial cross subsidy from dispensing income underpins other general medical services within each of the GP practices in the review.

It is important to understand that the financial impact on the practice of any potential change in dispensing arrangements, and associated income, cannot be taken into account in the Board's decision about which patients continue to have a serious difficulty of access. However, the Board does recognise that any change to dispensing income for these practices would need to be looked at carefully to assess the potential impacts on local care delivery. It is really important to understand that not all practices might be affected in the same way. Potential impacts will be influenced by the degree of cross subsidy that is taking place and the scale of any change to the requirement to dispense. The review may lead to no changes to who receives dispensing at some practices and quite significant change at others. NHS Grampian is committed to working with the GP practices, community pharmacies and local communities that might be affected by any changes coming out of this review to ensure that services continue to meet local need and remain sustainable in the future.

What is the timescale of decision making?

The findings from this public consultation will be reported to a Review Group by the end of October 2016. The Review Group will undertake its review, with opportunities for involvement of key stakeholders, throughout November 2016. During December and early January work will be undertaken to plan the implementation of any changes to dispensing and the impacts of these changes. A Steering Group will plan the implementation of the Review Group

decision throughout December 2016 and January 2017 and subject to Integrated Joint Board approval, the decision will be ratified at the Grampian NHS Board meeting in March 2017.

What is being consulted on and how do I respond to this consultation?

As part of the review NHS Grampian has to decide whether patients who currently get, or are eligible to get, their dispensed medicines from one of the six GP practices listed in this information sheet, have a serious difficulty in accessing dispensed medicines from a community pharmacy (local pharmacy).

NHS Grampian is keen to hear from patients who currently get their medicines dispensed at one of the six practices in the review. NHS Grampian would also like to hear from organisations and individuals who represent the local communities served by these practices and the independent NHS contractors that provide services to these communities.

If you are a patient who currently gets, or is eligible to get, your dispensed medicines from one of the GP practices being reviewed then please complete the attached form.

IMPORTANT: Please make sure you include your name, address and complete the section about which practice you get your medicines dispensed from. We will not be able to include your response if we do not have these details. We will not publish any personal information that links your response to this consultation.

Please send your response to: **Freepost, NHS Grampian** (no stamp is required).

If you prefer, you can e-mail your response to **nhsg.involve@nhs.net**

The closing date for all responses is 1 October 2016.

The link to this consultation on NHS Grampian's website is at:

www.nhsgrampian.org/involvingyou and by clicking on 'projects and consultations'.

If you represent a group, organisation, are an elected public representative or are an independent contractor to the NHS such as community pharmacies or medical practices, then NHS Grampian would like your response to the following question:

If dispensing of medicines was not available at a specific GP practice in this review, do you think that patients who currently get, or are eligible to get, their medicines from these practices will have a serious difficulty in getting their dispensed medicines from a community pharmacy? If your answer is yes, please describe what these difficulties would be and who they would apply to.

IMPORTANT: Please include the name and address of your group, organisation or business in your response. Submissions may be made public unless you or your group/organisation/business request otherwise.

Please send your response to: **Freepost, NHS Grampian** (no stamp is required).

If you prefer, you can e-mail your response to **nhsg.involve@nhs.net**

The closing date for all responses is 1 October 2016.

The link to the consultation on NHS Grampian's website is at:

www.nhsgrampian.org/involvingyou and by clicking on 'projects and consultations'.

This information sheet and questionnaire is also available in large print and other formats and languages upon request. Please call NHS Grampian on 01224 558098 or e-mail nhsg.involve@nhs.net

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This form is for patients who are registered with one of the six GP practices being reviewed. Please ensure you include your name, address and confirm which GP practice you are registered with. We will not be able to include your response if we do not have these details. We will not publish any personal information that links your response to this consultation.

1. If dispensing of medicines was not available at your GP practice, would you have a serious difficulty in getting your dispensed medicines from a community pharmacy?

Yes ☐ Please go to question 2.

No ☐

2. If you answered yes, please describe what these difficulties would be.

The following information must be completed in order for your response to be accepted and included. We will not publish any personal information that links your response to this consultation.

Your name:

Your address:

.....Postcode:

Which GP practice are you registered with?

NHS Grampian complies with the provisions and obligations of the Data Protection Act in the storage and retrieval of your personal information. Your information will not be disclosed or shared with any external organisations and will be handled by the Public Involvement Team.

Please send your response to: **Freepost, NHS Grampian** (no stamp is required).

If you prefer, you can e-mail your response to **nhsg.involve@nhs.net**

The closing date for all responses is **1 October 2016**. If using the Freepost address please allow 5 working days for your response to be received by NHS Grampian.