

## Guidance on Bulk Prescribing for Care Home Patients

**Compiled by: Medicines Optimisation Team April 2019**

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## Guidance on Bulk Prescribing for Care Home Patients

### What is bulk prescribing?

A bulk prescription is an order for **two or more patients** bearing the name of an institution in which at least **20 persons normally reside, 10 or more of whom are registered with a particular GP practice.**

### Why was this guidance produced?

It was recognised that bulk prescribing could provide the following benefits:

- Potential to reduce waste saving money for the NHS
- Reduction of space required in the drug trolley
- Reduces drug round time / dispensing time
- Reduces potential for administration error

### What is this guidance about?

It provides advice on the processes for prescribers, community pharmacy and care home staff for a limited range of commonly prescribed medication in care homes.

### What medications can be bulk prescribed?

The medication must be prescribed on the NHS and be either:

- [P] pharmacy medicine – a licensed medicine which can only be bought in a pharmacy or
- [GSL] general sales list – a licensed medicine which can be bought in a supermarket or other non-pharmacy retail shop

'POM' – 'Prescription Only Medicines' **cannot** be issued by bulk prescription e.g. antibiotics, blood pressure medication

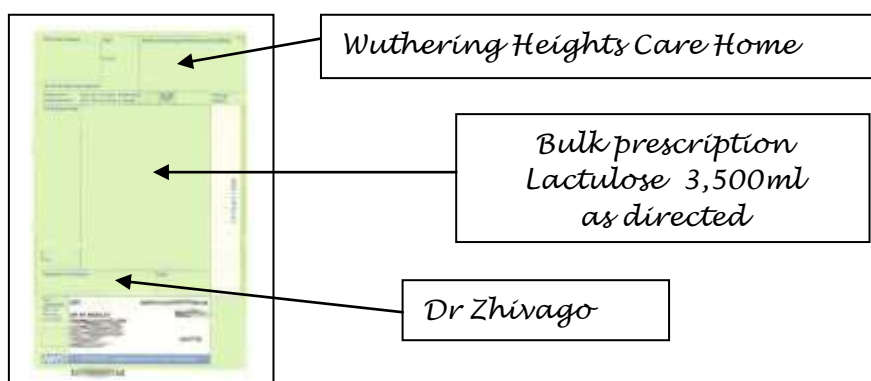
The following medicines are considered suitable for bulk prescribing:

- Lactulose Syrup
- Laxative sachets. E.g. Laxido, Cosmocool or Macrogol Sachets
- Senna Tablets
- Thickening Agents. E.g. Thick 'n Easy or Nutilis
- Paracetamol Tablets (Up to 96 tablets only (quantity greater than this is POM). Service users taking regular paracetamol are therefore not suitable for bulk prescription)

For Dressings see page 4.

See [appendix 8](#) for the **Quick Guide to Bulk Prescribing**

A bulk prescription can be written or printed on an ordinary FP10 prescription.



It has to include:

- the name of the care home (instead of the individual name of the service user)
- the date
- the words 'Bulk prescription' – to identify the type of prescription
- the medicine that is being bulk prescribed
- the total quantity required for all service users on this medication

The directions may state 'as directed' due to variation in doses for each service user. The service users own MAR chart will provide the dose to be administered for each service user.

## Bulk Prescribing Support for the Care Home Staff

### Starting bulk prescribing

- Refer to the list of medicines suitable for bulk prescription
- Decide if service users fit the criteria for bulk prescribing – see p1
- Care home manager and prescriber discuss and agree medicines that can be bulk prescribed in their care home and inform community pharmacy. See [Appendix 1 and 2](#)
- The care home manager must ensure that staff responsible for ordering and administering medication understands the principles of bulk prescribing.
- It is **not** appropriate for service users who self medicate to be included in bulk prescribing. In this situation, medicines are stored within a locked facility in the service user's own room. These must not be shared.
- The Royal Pharmaceutical Society for Great Britain recommends that bulk prescribing is not a way of obtaining stock items of homely remedies
- **On commencing treatment, the medication must be prescribed initially on a prescription bearing the service user's name. This will ensure the medicine and specific directions appear on that service user's subsequent MAR charts. This will also evidence that the service user has been prescribed this medication.** NB It is at the pharmacist's discretion whether a MAR chart for this bulk prescribed item is supplied as they are not contractually obliged to provide MAR charts.
- **Subsequent prescriptions for each new service user can then be ordered using a bulk prescription.**
- **The bulk prescription may state 'as directed'.**

- Prior to requesting a bulk prescription check current stock. By observing the dose prescribed and administered on the MAR, calculate the amount required for each service user. Total the amount required and record as example shown below:

Service user name	Dose	Total quantity prescribed for month
Service user a	10ml bd	560
Service user b	15ml bd	840
Service user c	10ml od	280
Service user d	10ml bd	560
Service user e	10ml bd	560
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2800</b>
	<b>Current stock level</b>	<b>1700ml</b>
	<b>Estimated amount remaining by the end of this cycle</b>	<b>300ml</b>
	<b>Total to be ordered</b>	<b>2500ml</b>
Service users whose dose has changed or stopped	Service users name Mrs A. Smith  Mr B. Jones	<i>delete as appropriate</i> <del>Dose Changed/ Stopped</del> 01/01/2019  <del>Dose Change/ Stopped</del> 01/01/2019

- It is suggested that a monthly order form for the bulk prescription is sent to the practice see sample above and [appendix 3](#).  
This should include:
  - the medication required for bulk prescription
  - the names of the service users to be included
  - the dose/ quantity they are currently taking
  - estimated current stock level
  - estimated amount remaining by the end of the month
  - the overall total quantity required on the bulk prescription
 It would be good practice to save a copy of this monthly order for your records.
- As with all prescriptions, the bulk prescription generated by the practice should be checked at the care home **prior** to it going to the community pharmacy - report any discrepancy to the prescriber.
- A copy of the monthly order form to be sent to community pharmacy with prescriptions.
- When ordering from the MAR chart there needs to be some indication to inform the community pharmacy that **the medicine is still to be continued but not to be supplied for the individual – you should indicate ‘bulk prescribing’ on the MAR chart where you would normally state quantity needed.**
- If the MAR chart is not used for ordering, for example, right hand side of prescription used, the monthly order form will inform the community pharmacy of the service users receiving medication by bulk prescription.

### Receiving the medication from community pharmacy

- Check that the quantity received was the quantity ordered NB: the label on the medicine will identify the care home not the individual service user e.g. ‘*Wuthering Heights*’
- Check that the MAR charts have the medicine and the correct current dose of the bulk prescribed medicine for each service user. Report any discrepancy to the community pharmacy
- The care home may want to use a booking-in sheet to record quantity received (see [appendix 4](#))

## Storage

- Store the bulk medicine in a lockable storage facility.

## Administration

- Observe the service user's MAR chart and the dose prescribed
- Bulk medicine should only be used when stated on MAR chart
- Select the bulk prescribed medicine –NB: this will be labelled with the care home not the individual service user
- To avoid unnecessary medication waste, ensure service user's initial supply of this medicine, labelled with their own name, is used for the individual before administering from bulk stock
- Follow the normal care home administration procedure

## Monthly re-ordering

When generating an order, the staff member responsible for the ordering must check quantities being administered, estimate amount remaining by the end of the month and adjust the total quantity to be ordered, if necessary, to prevent excess stock accumulating or being discarded.

Take into account:

- the variable dose prescribed, if applicable;
- the quantity being administered to the service users;
- the quantity currently in stock;
- Any service user who has stopped this medication. Where the medicine has been stopped by the prescriber, ensure the service user's MAR is endorsed appropriately and inform the community pharmacist that this has stopped using the bulk prescription order form. This will ensure the medicine does not appear on the new MAR.

**NB: there must be at least 2 services users who are still prescribed the particular bulk medicine when it is re-ordered.**

- A new prescription must be requested for the individual service user if there is any change to the dose of the bulk prescribed medication. Subsequent prescriptions can be requested on bulk prescription.

## Medication Waste Management

To avoid unnecessary medication waste, ensure service users' initial supplies, labelled with their own names, are used first before administering from bulk stock. Medication labelled with an individual's name must only be administered to that service user.

## Auditing bulk prescribing

Develop a tool to audit the bulk prescribing to evidence robust management of the process – see [appendix 5 and 6](#)

Regular audit of medication returns book will highlight any avoidable bulk medication returns.

## Dressings on bulk prescription

Non medicated dressings, if they can be purchased over the counter, can be issued on a bulk prescription if the request fits the criteria (see page 1).

As there is no specific guidance available on supplying dressings on a bulk prescription this guidance suggests options in order to obtain non medicated dressings.

**Option 1** - There is a patient specific direction (PSD) authorised by the prescriber for the dressing to be used for certain conditions. The requirement for the dressing may not be immediate and there should be clear documentation in the care plan of its future use.

If a bulk prescription is written by the prescriber for the non medicated dressing this may not have been printed on the MAR chart as there had been no initial prescription request for the individual. Therefore if and when there is a need for the dressing to be applied, all the appropriate information needs to be transcribed onto the service users MAR chart following the care home procedure. Please refer to transcribing guidance for further information.

**Option 2** - If there is a need to ensure non medicated dressings are available when required they could be purchased by the care home and managed through the homely remedy process.

The requirement for the dressing may not be immediate and therefore it is suggested that an initial prescription for the individual is not written. There should be clear documentation in the care plan of its future use. The prescriber should write a patient specific direction to authorise administration of the dressing for certain conditions. Where there has been no initial prescription for the individual, when there is a need for the dressing to be applied, all the appropriate information needs to be transcribed onto the service users MAR chart following the care home procedure. Please refer to transcribing guidance for further information

## Bulk Prescribing Support for Prescriber/ GP practice

- Refer to the list of medicines suitable for bulk prescription.
- Decide if service users fit the criteria for bulk prescribing – see page1.
- Prescriber and care home manager discuss and agree on medicines that can be bulk prescribed in the care home and inform community pharmacy ([appendix 1 and 2](#)).
- Agree a system with the care home regarding requests for bulk prescriptions.
- **Good practice, on commencing treatment, the medication should be prescribed for the service user on their prescription. This will ensure that any specific instructions appear on the first and subsequent MAR charts.** It would also be good practice for the entry to be made on the repeat screen to ensure there is a record of bulk prescribing e.g. access the service user's computer records and on the selected medication add '*bulk prescription*' to the instruction to identify it is supplied as part of bulk prescription (e.g. Lactulose 10ml twice daily - bulk prescription).
- Bulk prescriptions can either be handwritten or computer generated. The care home name is a requirement on the prescription. To allow computer generated

bulk prescriptions to be issued, it is suggested that the practice 'registers' the 'care home name' as an inactive patient. Using this record to issue all bulk prescriptions for that care home ensures a chronological record of items issued for audit purposes.

- If the above process is not used, and bulk prescriptions are handwritten there must be an alternative method of recording. **A record of the bulk prescription must be logged at the practice either via:**
  - **entry on the care home's 'inactive patient' record or**
  - **entering details onto each service users computer record**
- Ensure the order form is retained by the practice for audit purposes e.g. practice may choose to scan this order into the care home record.
- **On any change to the dose for an individual on this bulk prescription, the pharmacy will need to be notified by means of a new prescription generated for the individual service user. Subsequent prescriptions can be requested on bulk prescription.**
- Ensure staff are aware of the bulk prescribing process; amend repeat prescribing protocol to include bulk prescribing. See [appendix 7](#).

### **Bulk Prescribing Support for Community Pharmacy**

- Ensure dispensary staff are aware of principles of bulk prescribing.
- Agree a system with the care home regarding requests for bulk prescriptions.
- On commencing treatment, the medication must be prescribed initially on a prescription bearing the service user's name. This will ensure the medicine and specific directions appear on that service user's subsequent MAR charts – NB: It is at the pharmacist's discretion whether a MAR chart is supplied as they are not contractually obliged to provide them.
- Subsequent prescriptions for each new service user can then be ordered using a bulk prescription.
- Refer to the list agreed to be bulk prescribed.
- Check the following on the bulk prescription monthly order form from care home:
  - Check agreed medication list for bulk prescribing.
  - Check quantity requested matches bulk prescription.
  - Check that the service users listed on the bulk prescribing monthly order form have a record of the bulk prescribed medication on the MAR chart.
  - Confirm any discrepancies with care home/ prescriber.
  - While service user requires medication on bulk prescription, if supplying MAR chart, print the medication and direction to allow endorsement of administration to be made.
  - Indicate medication is bulk prescribed on MAR chart.
  - Bulk Prescriptions are submitted to the Business Services Authority as normal.

Note that there are no prescription charges for a bulk prescription.

## Resources

- Isle of Wight Bulk Prescribing Procedure October 2009
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society The Administration and Control of Medicines in Care Homes and Children's Services 2003
- NHS Drug Tariff (current edition)
- PrescQIPP – Implementing Bulk prescribing for Care Homes

## Appendices – samples of recording forms

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**Appendix 1**

**Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medication (Sample)**

<b>Care Home:</b>	
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<b>Medication:</b>

<b>Dressing ( if applicable)</b>

I authorise the medicines listed above to be bulk prescribed for this care home and I can confirm that there are 10 or more residents that are registered from this home under my care.	
<b>GP Name:</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

I agree to the medicines listed above to be bulk prescribed for the patients at this care home and can confirm that there are at least 20 persons who normally reside with us. We take responsibility to check and order the quantity required each month for all the patients on these medicines and will inform the surgery of any changes.		
<b>Care Home Staff member:</b>		<b>Job Title</b>
<b>Signature:</b>		
<b>Date:</b>		

## Appendix 2

### GP/Care Home to Community Pharmacy form

[Insert surgery address]

Date

[Insert pharmacy address]

### Re: Bulk prescribing for our care homes patients

Dear [insert pharmacist name],

I am writing to inform you that as of [insert the date] Dr [insert GP name] would like to start prescribing the medicines listed in the table below for patients under his/her care at [insert care home name].

I can confirm that there are ten or more patients at this care home who are registered with this GP at this surgery and that this list has been agreed with the care home manager

Bulk medication for [insert name] care home

The GP agrees to write the initial prescription for the named patient for the bulk medication, subsequent prescriptions for these patients can then be ordered using the bulk prescription.

May I request that you keep sufficient stock of these medicines to fulfill the care homes monthly order. The care home is responsible for checking their stock levels and ordering the quantity required for all their patients for the month on that medicine.

May I also request that the MAR chart for the patients that have a bulk prescribed item states 'from bulk supply' [delete if pharmacist not completing MAR charts]

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact [insert name] at the surgery, who will be happy to assist you.

I hope that you will find this process will be more efficient and will reduce wastage and I thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

(On Behalf of Dr [insert name])

**Appendix 3**

**Bulk prescribing order form – for the attention of the surgery**  
 (Sample)

Care home .....

Bulk prescribed medication..... Month .....

Service user's name	Dose	Total quantity prescribed for month
	<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Current stock level</b>	
	<b>Estimated amount remaining by the end of this cycle</b>	
	<b>Total required on a bulk prescription</b>	
Service users whose dose has changed or stopped	Service users name	<i>delete as appropriate</i> date
	.....	dose change/ stopped     .....
	.....	dose change/ stopped     .....

Signature of staff member..... Date.....

Print name.....

**Appendix 4  
Booking - in Sheet for Bulk Prescribed Medication (Sample)**

<b>Month/ Date:</b>	
<b>Unit:</b>	

<b>Name of Medication</b>	<b>Quantity Received</b>	<b>Quantity already in Stock</b> <i>Including store room and drug trolleys</i>	<b>Total Quantity in Stock at Beginning of Cycle</b>	<b>Quantity removed from stock</b>	<b>Comments/Action</b> <i>i.e. excess stock, do not order next month</i>

**All stock not used at the end of the cycle must be carried forward and stock adjustments made to the quantities ordered; if excess accumulates add notes to comments column.**

Appendix 5

**Bulk Prescribed Medication Audit Tool (Sample)**

<b>Month/ Date:</b>	
<b>Unit:</b>	

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>Medication Name</b>	<b>Number of residents receiving bulk prescribed medication</b>	<b>Quantity received this month</b>	<b>Quantity already in Stock</b> <i>Including Store room and drug trolleys</i>	<b>Total Quantity in Stock at Beginning of Cycle</b> <i>Add column C and D</i>	<b>Total number of Doses recorded as administered/spoilt doses</b>	<b>Actual Total in stock</b> <i>Column E - F</i>	<b>Action Required if discrepancy</b>

## Appendix 6

### Care Home rational for audit measurements

	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>How do to this</b>
Number of residents on the bulk prescribed item	<p>This will enable you to check that the number of residents on this bulk prescribed item meet the criteria required for a bulk prescription.</p> <p>This will enable you to check if any new residents are to be included to use this bulk prescribed item and if you need to inform the GP practice or community pharmacy.</p>	<p>Check through the current MAR charts for old and new residents prescribed this bulk prescribed item Has any resident;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ moved to another care setting</li> <li>○ discontinued the use of this bulk prescribed item</li> <li>○ had their dose changed</li> </ul>
Quantity of the bulk prescribed item received this month	Recording the total received will be added to the total already in stock at the home – the amount administered will then be deducted from the this total to give the expected total	<p>Use the recent bulk prescription order form</p> <p>The pharmacy may be able to provide a MAR chart for these bulk items if requested</p>
Quantity of the bulk prescribed item already in the care home	Recording the total already at the care home will be added to the quantity received - see above	Check the stock room and drug trolleys. You may wish to allocate an amount of the total bulk prescribed item to each landing in order to make the audit more manageable
Quantity of bulk prescribed item administered / spoilt doses for this month	Recording the total amount administered to the residents prescribed this bulk prescribed item will be used to calculate if this tallies with the quantity left. Check to see if there is any recorded evidence of problems with the prescribed bulk item. Some doses maybe spoilt. This will be entered in the medication waste book	<p>Check through the current MAR charts; look at the doses prescribed and the quantity administered. Add all the quantities together and record.</p> <p>Check through the medication waste book. Record any bulk prescribed quantities that were not administered</p>
Expected total running balance	Recording the amount that is expected to be the total will enable you to check the actual balance and identify and discrepancies	Calculate total number of doses with the actual doses Does this marry with the total running balance?

## Appendix 7

### Practice Repeat Prescribing Protocol - Bulk Prescribing (Sample)

#### Bulk Prescribing

A bulk prescription is an order for **two or more patients** bearing the name of an institution in which at least **20 persons normally reside, 10 or more of whom are registered with a particular GP practice.**

#### What medications can be bulk prescribed?

The medication must be prescribed on the NHS and be either:

- [P] pharmacy medicine – a licensed medicine which can only be bought in a pharmacy or
- [GSL] general sales list – a licensed medicine which can be bought in a supermarket or other non-pharmacy retail shop

'POM' – 'Prescription Only Medicines' **cannot** be issued by bulk prescription e.g. antibiotics, blood pressure medication

The following medicines are considered suitable for bulk prescribing:

- Lactulose Syrup
  - Laxative sachets. E.g. Laxido, Cosmocool or Macrogol Sachets
  - Senna Tablets
  - Thickening Agents. E.g. Thick 'n Easy or Nutilis
  - Paracetamol Tablets (Up to 96 tablets only (quantity greater than this is POM). Service users taking regular paracetamol are therefore not suitable for bulk prescription)
  - Non-medicated dressings
- Practice staff will receive requests from the care home which may include bulk prescribing requests
  - Practice staff dealing with bulk prescribing will need to have been trained accordingly and understand the processes involved
  - Practice staff will be provided with a list of service users requiring medicine on bulk prescription by the care home.
  - Practice staff should check that all such requests fit the criteria for bulk prescribing (i.e. [P] or [GSL] medicines, non-medicated dressings – not [POM] medicines)
  - Practice staff should check that an initial prescription has been generated and issued for each service user for the medicine **prior** to the bulk prescription request
  - Practice staff should check that there is a record of bulk prescribing on the service user's repeat screen, i.e. that '**bulk prescription**' has been added to the directions e.g.

**Lactulose 10ml to be taken twice daily - bulk prescription.**

- Ensure that the amount requested on the Bulk Prescribing Order form is appropriate for the number of service users and their individual doses. Please note that the amount requested may differ each month due to stock control. Refer to prescriber if unsure.
- Generate a prescription for the required amount. A bulk prescription can be handwritten or printed on an ordinary FP10 prescription. However, please note that a bulk prescription cannot be sent electronically

#### Details to be included on the prescription:

- Name of the care home (instead of the individual name of the service user)
- Date
- The words 'bulk prescription' – to identify the type of prescription

- The medicine that is being bulk prescribed
- The total quantity required for all service users on this medication
- Directions, though these may state 'as directed' due to variation in doses for each service user.

It is good practice to keep a copy of all orders received from the care home. For example, scan these documents into the care home record.

Note that all service users should be reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure that the prescription is still required



## Quick Guide to Bulk Prescribing

## Care Home

Care home / prescriber discuss process and agree medicines from list to be bulk prescribed

Check that the request fits criteria for bulk prescribing

For each new service user, the medication must be prescribed initially on a prescription bearing the service user's name.

Before re-ordering - check quantity already in the care home and amount required for each service user. Adjust total quantity to prevent excess stock accumulating or being discarded. Completed **bulk prescribing order form** to be sent to practice – calculate quantity required, keep copy of order form.

Check prescription prior to sending to community pharmacy – send copy of order to community pharmacy with prescription – communicate when stopped or dose changed.

Check MAR charts and medication received  
NB - medication is labelled with name of organisation not the individual service user

Administer medication to service user as prescribed

Regular audit of medication returns book will highlight any avoidable bulk medication returns

## Prescriber / GP Practice

Care home / prescriber discuss process and agree medicines from list to be bulk prescribed

Receive request for bulk prescription from care home via **bulk prescribing order form**  
Check request fits criteria for bulk prescribing

Ensure initial prescription has previously been requested for service user.  
To indicate medication requested is now via bulk prescription add '*bulk prescription*' to medication instruction on service users repeat medication screen

Generate bulk prescription for the care home electronically or handwritten as stated in practice protocol

Ensure the order form is retained by the practice for audit purposes e.g. practice may choose to scan this into the care home record

## Community Pharmacy

Observe list agreed to be bulk prescribed

- Check that the prescriptions correspond with the **bulk prescribing order form** from the care home and that all items meet the criteria for bulk prescribing.
- Also check that the quantity requested on the form matches the bulk prescription
- Check that the service users listed on the bulk prescribing order form have a previous record in the PMR and that the directions for any bulk prescribed medication appears on any supplied MAR

If providing MAR chart ensure specific instruction for this medication is on the MAR chart

If providing MAR Indicate 'bulk prescription item' to MAR