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Dear Colleague,

NHS Provision of Gluten Free Food in Vale of York CCG

The key points of this letter are:

- The CCG's prescribing policy is being brought in line with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) recommendations; the CCG's prescribing policy will change from allowing bread and *flour*, to bread and *mixes*.
- It is expected that Gluten free flour will be removed from the national drug tariff soon and will not be available on FP10, but there is no confirmed timescale for this at present.
- The gluten free foods top-up card pilot is being brought to a close due to poor engagement, excessive administrative burden, and governance concerns around the cards being vulnerable to misuse.
- Communications are being sent to the pilot participants outlining the CCG's decision and the timeline for ending the pilot. The cards will be topped up with funds for April, May, and June, following which participants have the option of reinstating their prescriptions. An 'order form' will be included with the communications sent to these patients (copy of both enclosed for information), which may be completed and returned to practices to minimise the burden on general practice and avoid unnecessary GP consultations.
- Patients who are currently receiving flour on prescription and wish to switch to mixes may also use the enclosed 'order form' to do so.
- The CCG would like to emphasise the message, "this is our NHS, so let's take care of it, together", and ask that patients who receive gluten free foods on prescription think about what they order, only ask for what they need, and only rely on NHS gluten free foods if absolutely necessary.

As you may be aware, the CCG ran a consultation from 9th October to 24th November 2017, with the aim of seeking views on a proposal to cease all prescribing of gluten free foods, and replace with the visa top-up card scheme, which would be made available only to the most vulnerable people in our community who are least able to afford to purchase gluten free foods (patients on certain means-tested benefits).

The online survey received 294 responses and showed that 55.29% of respondents disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the proposals; qualitative feedback from respondents who disagreed with the proposals highlighted concerns regarding the policy in relation to the NHS Constitution, and whether using means-tested benefits as an eligibility criteria would be effective in identifying the most vulnerable patients.

The CCG has given very careful consideration to the feedback from the consultation and subsequently the recommendations made by the DHSC following their national consultation. Consequently, it has taken longer than anticipated for us to reach, and communicate, the outcome of our consultation. The CCG has decided to adopt the position recommended by the DHSC; therefore **gluten free bread and mixes will be available on prescription for all patients with a confirmed diagnosis of Coeliac Disease**. The CCG is aware that the DHSC is working to remove gluten free flour from the national drug tariff, following which it will not be possible to prescribe it, but at this time there is no confirmed timescale for this.

The CCG has also taken the decision not to continue the pilot of the gluten free top-up card. When the pilot was evaluated it was identified that more than one third (35%) of the cards appeared not to be in regular use, there were governance concerns around the cards being vulnerable to misuse, which the CCG was unable to fully mitigate, and additionally, there was a significant administrative burden to the CCG associated with processing applications for, and loading the top-up cards. The CCG understands that this decision will be disappointing to some of the pilot participants, and potentially to general practice; the CCG is working to engage with patients and practices to minimise the impact wherever possible, for example through the development of the 'order form' for pilot participants to reinstate prescriptions without the need for a GP appointment.

Should you have any comments, queries, or concerns as a result of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Louise Horsfield
Commissioning and Transformation Manager