

3rd April 2018

Private and Confidential

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Dear Sir/Madam,

NHS Provision of Gluten Free Food in Vale of York CCG

Thank you for your involvement in the CCG's gluten free foods top-up card pilot and our consultation regarding gluten free food.

As you are aware, the consultation ran 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 consultation period allowed the CCG to gather feedback from a range of stakeholders, including York Teaching Hospitals Trust, local GPs, and Coeliac UK, amongst others. The CCG focused particularly on gathering views from the group of people who would be most affected by the proposals: those with coeliac disease and those caring for someone with coeliac disease.

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 Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) following their national consultation. Consequently, it has taken longer than anticipated for us to reach, and communicate, the outcome of our consultation.

Having taken into account all the available information, 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. Due to disappointing engagement with the pilot and the significant administrative burden to the CCG associated with processing applications for, and loading the top-up cards the decision was taken to bring the pilot to a close. The CCG understands that this decision will be disappointing to some of the pilot participants.

The top-up cards will be loaded as normal in April, and then will be loaded again in May with funds for May and June (subject to the balance on the card being below the maximum threshold of £48). Following that, no further top-ups will be made and **card holders are asked to ensure that all balances are used in full.** Once the balance on the card has been used in full, participants of the pilot will have the option of reverting to prescription to receive bread and mixes. An 'order form' is enclosed which can be used to request that your prescriptions are reinstated without the need for you to see your GP; the form should be completed to indicate your requested products and returned to your GP practice. Patients who have not been part of the pilot, and have been receiving their bread and flour on prescription may also use this order form to switch from flour to mixes.

The CCG is keen for all Vale of York residents to get behind the campaign "this is our NHS, so let's take care of it, together". The CCG asks that everyone who receives repeat prescriptions, for gluten free foods or for other medications and treatments, thinks about what they order, only asks for what they need, and only relies on NHS prescriptions if absolutely necessary.

Should you have any comments, queries, or concerns as a result of this letter, please contact the Patient Relations Team at the CCG (contact details above) for assistance. If you would be interested in attending a face-to-face event to ask any questions, then please let the Patient Relations Team know and, if there is sufficient demand, an event will be organised.

Yours sincerely



Louise Horsfield
Commissioning and Transformation Manager