

Only order what you need - Reducing repeat prescription ordering

Communications Plan January 2024



1. Introduction and background

Approximately 1.6m medicine items are wasted unnecessarily in Dorset each year.

This creates negative repercussions for patient safety, drug supply, chains, staff time and environmental pollution/carbon emissions.

Evidence suggests that there are a number of key patient beliefs such as obligation to order everything on a repeat prescription slip, that is adding to this wastage. There are also system issues which contribute to unnecessary medicine ordering.

The main purpose of this campaign is to help reduce the number of unnecessary medicines ordered off a repeat prescription. The campaign will raise awareness of this issue, primarily amongst Dorset residents aged 65+ which are the group of people with the highest number of repeat prescriptions.

Campaign roll out 1 February 2024.

2. Communication objectives

The main objective is to help reduce the number of repeat prescription orders in Dorset by 2% compared to the previous year for the same period (Feb/March 2023).

Actions to achieve this objective include:

1. Engagement with patient groups and staff
2. Communication with pharmacy and general practice staff, and other stakeholders, about the aims of this campaign and to work collaboratively
3. Use of local data to make informed choices about the target audience and messaging for the campaign, both in planning and during the campaign
4. Provide clear and succinct advice to the public about the need to reduce medicine waste, the importance of only ordering medicines that are needed and the implications of over ordering from repeat prescriptions

3. Stakeholder Analysis

Strategic Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Dorset • General practice /Primary Care Networks • Community pharmacies 	Closest to the work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Dorset Pharmacy team • NHS Dorset Communication team • Community pharmacies • General practice /Primary Care Networks
Proactive communication/monitor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General practice digital and communication leads • Community pharmacy staff • GP Patient Participation Groups • NHS Dorset Staff • Dorset General Practice Alliance 	Keep informed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCSE where relevant, e.g. Healthwatch • Media • Social media • Patient voice groups • Carers groups • ICS public engagement group • Digital public engagement group • ICS engagement leads network • ICS communication leads • Learning disability groups

Key Team Members involved in this work from NHS Dorset ICB:

- Peter Cope, Head of Medicines Optimisation
- Tracy Lyons, Principal Pharmacist, Medicines Optimisation
- Fiona Arnold, Community Pharmacy Clinical Integration Lead
- Casey Jeffery, Senior Communications Officer
- Maryann Crowley, Graphic Designer
- Olivia Glorney, Digital Communications and Engagement Coordinator
- Liz Connolly, Marketing and Digital Lead

4. Audience

The primary audience is patients age 65+ who have repeat prescriptions for multiple medications.

Secondary audiences:

- Some areas, such as Weymouth and Portland, have a high number of younger people age 45+ with long term conditions
- Carers

This campaign will also organically reach a wider audience and people across Dorset.

5. Key messages

Repeat prescriptions? Only order what you need

Did you know that approximately 1.6million medicine items are wasted unnecessarily in Dorset each year? We need your help to reduce this.

Why is this important?



Stay well

- Unused medicines go out of date and might not work as intended, meaning your care might be compromised
- Stockpiling medicines worsens drug shortages



Stay safe

- Stockpiles of medicines kept at home can be dangerous for children and pets
- Medicines are only prescribed for you, and it is not safe to share prescribed medicines with anyone else



Safe green

- When you dispose of medicines properly, by handing them in to your pharmacy, you are helping to make sure that waste medicines do not pollute our rivers and seas
- Only ordering what you need means that you are helping the environment because once medicines have left the pharmacy, they cannot be recycled or used by anyone else

Thank you for helping your community to reduce medicine waste.

If you have any questions about anything on medicines waste, visit www.nhsdorset.nhs.uk/yourmeds or contact: medicine.question@nhsdorset.nhs.uk

For stakeholders

We need your help. NHS Dorset have launched a new medicine waste campaign, please help us make a difference and share this message.

Around 50,000 people in Dorset have repeat prescriptions for multiple medications every month. It is estimated that 1.6 million repeat prescription items are wasted unnecessarily in Dorset each year.

[Only order what you need](#) hopes to encourage people on repeat prescriptions to check what medicines they have at home before they order.

Please like and share our social media posts on @NHSDorset.

If you have any questions, please email communication@nhsdorset.nhs.uk

Repeat prescriptions? ☒

Only order what you need

-  **10% of medicines** prescribed nationally are not needed
-  In Dorset we spend **£9 million** a month on repeat medications
-  Speak to your **pharmacy team** about only ordering what you need

Find out more about our medicine waste campaign at:
nhsdorset.nhs.uk/yourmeds

6. Communication Methods

Internal/Primary Care

- FYI news on intranet– for NHS Dorset staff awareness
- GP intranet page of assets/ resources for practice staff to download
- Weekly GP bulletin new items
- Email out to all primary care communication colleagues
- Email out to pharmacy colleagues with resources and assets
- Ongoing meetings with key members of pharmacy and communication teams

External audience

- **Print/ traditional platforms**
 - Press release sent out to all local media
 - Portland magazine
 - Dorset magazine
 - General practice newsletters
 - General practice digital screens
 - Posters in general practices and pharmacies
 - Table stand in general practice and pharmacies
 - Radio adverts for a 2 week campaign
 - Banner for events
 - Text printed on the bottom of prescription slips
- **Digital platforms**
 - Text messages from general practice to primary audience (patients 65+)
 - Webpage
 - Social media – Facebook/ Instagram/ LinkedIn/ Twitter NHS Dorset pages and general practice pages
 - Targeted advertising on SM
 - General practice websites and newsletters
 - Email to all stakeholders
- **In-person engagement (events, workshops).**
 - Engagement with Patient Participation Groups
 - Engagement with pharmacy staff
 - Pharmacy staff encouraged to speak to customers reminding them to open the bag, check their meds and repeat prescriptions

7. Communication Action Plan

Budget: £10,000

Internal/Primary Care

Method	What	Lead	Cost
Steering group	Digital, communications and medicines teams.	Pharmacy	/
Survey	Exploring which printed campaign materials general practices can display in their reception areas	Communication	/
Staff briefings	Agreed campaign slogans, tested with primary care colleagues.	Pharmacy Communication Primary care	/
Graphic design team meeting	-Finalising the identity and graphic design for all materials including social media, print, website -Visual design based on target audience research	Communication Pharmacy	/
Intranet updates and verbal updates at staff meetings and video	- Primary care digital and communication leads co-write the text message and prescription slip text - GP intranet page created with all the communication information - Ongoing meetings with primary care. Tracked data and encouraged practices to join in direct messaging from the results of early adopters.	Communication Primary care digital and communication	/
Direct email to community pharmacy staff (ICB)	Outlining the campaign and responsibilities	Pharmacy	/

Community Stakeholder/Public

Method	What	Lead	Cost
Engagement	Attending patient groups and sense checking the communication with them and target audience	Pharmacy	/
Online - Web page created	Only order what you need Medicines waste – NHS Dorset	Communication	/
Social reel	Raising awareness about medicine waste	Communication	/
Social media (organic and paid)	Only order what you need various messages	Primary care NHS Dorset	£608
Press release	Sent out to all local media	Communication	/
Local magazines and press	Portland magazine Dorset news	Communication	/
Posters/ table talkers/ banner with QR code	Sent to all general practice and pharmacies to display	Communication	£1983
Text messages	-Signed off by Information Governance team -Cohort of patients identified by pharmacy team -Text message wording finalised -Support primary care colleagues to send text message	Communication Primary care Pharmacy	£2555
Radio ad	Deployed targeted radio messaging on digital radio at postcodes with higher levels of polypharmacy,	Communication Pharmacy	£2100
Other Digital assets	Share on GP and pharmacy digital screens - ensured on website for pharmacies to download asserts and on GP intranet for general practice	Communication Primary care	/
Direct email to stakeholders	With the campaign message/links and an ask for them to share this	Communication Pharmacy	/

Risks and considerations

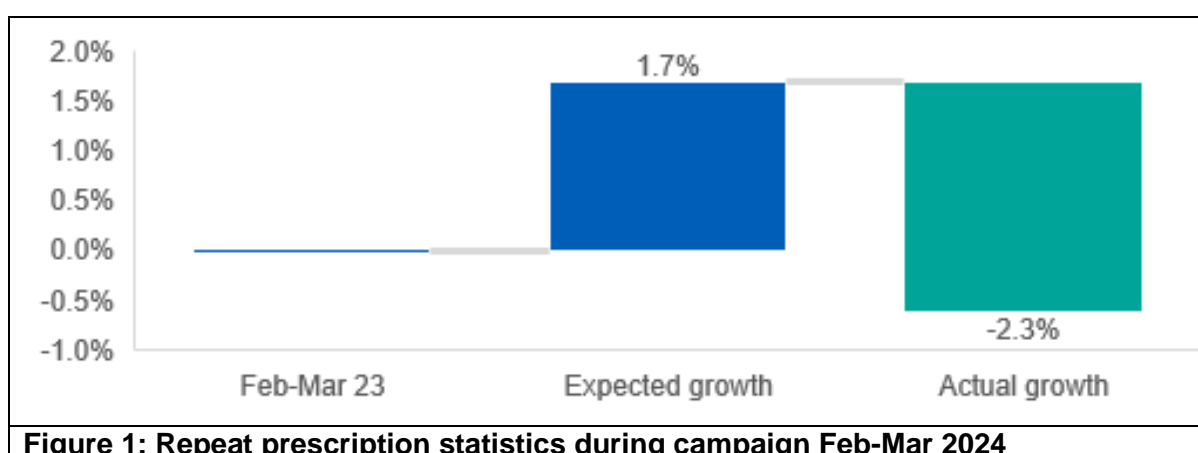
Risk/Issues	Mitigation	Level (Low/medium/high)
Social media comments might be negative/ posts misunderstood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard replies to be agreed with pharmacy team • Comments to be logged and discussed with team planning re future comms messaging 	Medium
Practices do not send the text message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closely monitoring the data to see which practices send the text • Regular check ins with primary care • Attendance at practice manager meetings to raise awareness about campaign • Engage with practices to understand concerns and address these • Use GP intranet to communicate regularly and have open channel of communication 	High
Practices send text inaccurately and overspend on budget	See above re communication and check ins	Low
This campaign might lead to an increase in calls to general practices/ Public misunderstand message leading to extra demand through 111 and ED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign messaging was agreed with pharmacies to say, speak to a pharmacist. • NHS Dorset contact details agreed • Targeted audience 	Medium

8.Results

The total amount spent on the campaign Feb – March 2024 was £7,246

The estimated saving during this period has been calculated at approximately £350-550k. This takes into account the decreased prescribing against where we expected to be, due to national growth trends in prescriptions being issued.

The number of repeats issued less than expected 65,162 during Feb/March 2024.



- Reduced repeat prescription volume correlated with practice engagement direct messaging funded by ICB and physical asset display to reinforce campaign message.
- Physical assets at point of repeat prescription ordering in GP practices and pharmacies supported conversations and visual reminder.
- Targeted social media & radio campaigns with positive messages had positive engagement in age groups most likely to order repeat prescriptions.

9. Evaluation

The campaign was successful in achieving its main objective of helping reduce the number of repeat prescription orders in Dorset by 2% compared to Feb/March 2023.

See full Campaign Evaluation for stats.

There has been learning points to take forward for the next phases of the pharmacy campaign including:

- The campaign took a joined-up approach working closely with primary care colleagues to deliver. The key to this was weekly check ins, open and honest conversations, and one to ones where required to offer support to primary care comms colleagues to send out the messages.
- Messages from GP practices reached the largest audience and had the biggest impact – whether a practice sent the campaign text had a direct impact on prescription stats. Social media posts shared by practices had the widest reach. Therefore, practices sharing NHS Dorset messages was important to the success.
- Learning point to make sharing social posts as quick and easy as possible for practices, by either private messaging them on facebook with an ask to share or mentioning them in the post if there is enough text space.
- Practice manager buy-in is essential - one of the biggest barriers to the text being sent out was if a PM had concerns re sending out the text.
- Patient feedback was that some people who received the text were concerned they were being singled out rather than it being a general text.
- The text did generate some calls to practices so some reflection is needed about how to reduce the likelihood of this happening in future.
- Having front line pharmacy staff on board and aware of the campaign is crucial – feedback from patients told us that despite their awareness of their medication needs, some pharmacists were ticking all the boxes on the prescription slip still.
- Acknowledging and thanking people who are already doing this action equally important – comments on social media highlighted this and some felt that the NHS were telling people what to do when they were already doing it.

- At least three months planning would be ideal to include more patient engagement and testing of messaging.
- To help with the evaluation, the QR code and URL in the text messages could have been done in a way so that we can track the number of click throughs. This will be explored for future projects.

Other campaign learning points include:



10. Next steps

The campaign is part of a wider initiative to reduce medicine waste and unnecessary prescribing. There will be new campaigns following on from this repeat prescription campaign around using the NHS App for prescription orders and stopping the amount of low priority prescribing.

The 'only order what you need' materials such as social media posts will continue to be shared ad hoc around bank holidays and times where there are higher levels of prescribing than normal to reinforce this message.

The campaign materials can be adapted and shared with other ICBs across the country for them to use.