



*Merton*

*Clinical Commissioning Group*

# Choose Wisely in Merton



right care  
right place  
right time  
right outcome

# Introduction

- Merton CCG is required to make the best use of an annual budget to keep people in the borough of Merton well.
- During 2016/17 Merton CCG has had to deliver savings of £7.3m. In 2017/18 it's expected that the CCG will need to find at least another £13m of savings, this is a substantial financial challenge for a CCG of our size.
- We are considering developing a number of clinical policies which set thresholds for some treatments and do not fund other treatments except in very limited and exceptional circumstances (e.g. many cosmetic procedures).
- Examining the use of prescriptions for:
  - Gluten free foods
  - Vitamin supplements
  - Self-care medications
- We have started engagement about changing access to IVF and specialised fertility services
- Supporting patients to be more surgery ready with increased referrals to stop smoking and weight management services



# Case for Change – Self Care Medicines

- As new expensive treatments become available in the NHS, we have a responsibility to look at how we spend the limited public resources we have to fund medicines and certain treatments
- Merton CCG currently spends £249,000 on prescriptions for self care such as paracetamol, cough and cold remedies, multivitamins and antihistamines.
- These medicines are now available from outlets like supermarkets, petrol stations, convenience stores and pharmacies less than half the price the NHS pays.



# Who will be exempt ?

This will **not** apply to :

- Patients with chronic long term conditions e.g. rheumatoid arthritis
- Those identified as having specific vitamin and mineral deficiencies and require medical intervention to treat the deficiency.

**Are there any other categories you believe should be exempt?**



# Gluten free products

- Merton CCG currently spends £49k a year on gluten free products
- There is now wide availability of gluten free products reasonably priced in supermarkets
- Merton CCG issued 3,800 prescriptions for gluten free products last year
- It costs the NHS more than twice what it costs in a supermarket.
- The highest numbers of gluten free foods are prescribed in the most affluent parts of the borough



# What are we proposing?

- Merton CCG proposes to stop prescribing gluten free foods because:
- We don't currently prescribe special foods for people with other dietary requirements
- It is possible to eat a healthy balanced gluten free diet without the need for specialist gluten free foods
- Improved food labelling now means it is easier to identify gluten free food which can be safely eaten.
- This topic is a key element of our current engagement and is being enacted across SW London and our governing body will make a decision about next steps in March



## Possible changes to IVF Policy

- We are engaging with the people to look at options for changing the thresholds for IVF and specialised fertility services – this could include moving to access only in limited circumstances
- We currently spend in the order of £700k p.a. to treat approximately 150 patients each year.
- We note that two neighbouring CCGs (Richmond and Croydon) are already in 8-week consultation processes on this issue
- We plan to engage in February and March – leading to a possible decision point by the CCG governing body in late March



# Supporting patients to be surgery ready

- Merton CCG is enacting a policy of increasing patient readiness or fitness before surgery in particular addressing smoking and patients being overweight – but making sure there are more referrals for publicly funded treatments.
- Obesity and smoking are major triggers for ill health and premature death, patients who lose weight or stop smoking are more likely to have fewer complications from their surgery and have wider long-term health benefits
- We are not proposing a ban on any patients receiving treatment on the basis of their weight or smoking but have a firm requirement that GP help patients consider and then take the supported steps to achieve a particular goal to address smoking and excess weight before a referral or approval to operate is made





## How are we engaging patients and the local community on the possible changes?

We are planning to see over 40 different groups and organisations from within the borough, engagement events and meetings have already taken place or are planned with the following groups

- Coeliac UK
- Families and parents through the children centres,
- The Merton Community Forums
- Circle Clarion Tenants and Residents Association
- Age UK
- Tamil Elderly Project
- Polish Family Project



The pre- engagement has followed our obligations under the Public Sector  
Race Equality Duty



# Initial Feedback

**The feedback so far has been quite useful the main themes to emerge are;**

- A general understanding for the case for change e.g. cost v clinical value
- The impact on certain groups and communities particular on funding expensive treatments such as IVF, many felt this issue was very emotive and should not just be seen in terms of cost savings
- Those on low incomes or with LTCs may be impacted particularly with the changes to prescribing and stopping gluten free products
- The thresholds work has prompted a wider debate on the public health agenda in terms of who should take responsibility for tackling smoking and obesity
- The savings should be seen in terms of wider NHS savings which all SW London CCGs are undertaking



## What happens next ?

- The CCG's Governing Body is undertaking an extensive public engagement programme to discuss these ideas and options with local before making decisions on how to proceed. They will consider all views raised at a Governing Body meeting held in public at the end of March.
- Engagement will begin w/c 13 Feb and run for approximately 6 weeks. This work is to assist the CCG formulate its proposals including suggestions for appropriate safeguards.
- No decisions have been taken at this time and we welcome your thoughts on these issues including any safeguards and/or exempted groups.
- For all the proposals the individual funding request (IFR) process will be available for patients with exceptional circumstances.

