

# Bulk Prescribing for Care Homes: A Guide for Care Home Teams

## Bulk Prescribing

**Definition:** A "Bulk" prescription is an order for two or more service users in a care home of at least 20 service users, where at least 10 of them are under the same GP practice. Bulk prescriptions can be used to order a stock of repeat medicines, many of which are used 'when required' (PRN), in advance so they will be available without delay. This stock is then shared between service users who have been individually prescribed the medicine rather than each service user receiving their own separate supply.

Bulk prescriptions can only be issued for items routinely prescribed, not in response to an acute situation (in which case a homely remedy policy may be appropriate). Service users must already have the medicine prescribed to them individually before a bulk prescription can be used so that their personal directions will appear on the MAR chart. How MAR charts are produced will need to be agreed locally, they can be supplied by the community pharmacy if they offer that service or written by appropriately trained and qualified staff in the care home. The total quantity on the MAR chart can be recorded as 'bulk'.

There are no restrictions on the amount of medicine that can be ordered on a bulk prescription, but they cannot be 'Prescription Only Medicines' (POMs). This means only 'Over-the-counter' (OTC) medicines can be bulk prescribed.

OTC medicines can either be bought only in a Pharmacy – 'Pharmacy' (P) medicines – or can be bought from pharmacies and other outlets such as supermarkets or newsagents – General Sales List (GSL) medicines.

Of note, a quantity of more than **96** paracetamol tablets is classed as a POM and so cannot be bulk prescribed but up to 96 tablets can be. This means large numbers of paracetamol tablets for service users to take regularly are not suitable for bulk prescribing. However, a care provider can purchase 96 x paracetamol 500mg tablets for homely remedy stock (please inform pharmacy that they are being purchased for homely remedy stock).

## Dressings

Simple non-medicated dressings for treating minor wounds, including burns, pressure ulcers and cuts or scratches that break the skin may be suitable for bulk prescribing. The dressings must be prescribed to the home and not for an individual person. They are then held as stock by the home to use when needed.

## Sip feeds and food supplements

If more than two service users require the same food supplement, such as Complan or Ensure, bulk prescribing may reduce waste and provide more choice of flavours, however it is important to note that the CQC prefer individual patient prescribing.

## Creams, ointments and topical applications

Creams, ointments and topical applications should not be bulk prescribed as they cannot be shared between more than one person.

## Service users who self-medicate

Bulk prescribing cannot be used for service users who self-medicate. For these service users their medicines are stored in a locker in the service user's room and cannot not be shared.

## Benefits of bulk prescribing

- Potential to reduce waste saving money for the NHS.
- Reduction of space required in the drug trolley.
- Reduces drug round and dispensing time.
- Save time when treating an outbreak such as of scabies when all the service users require the same treatment.

## Examples of medications that might be suitable for bulk prescribing:

- Bisacodyl tablets
- Lactulose syrup
- Movicol / Laxido / generic macrogol sachets
- Paracetamol suspension 250mg/5ml
- Paracetamol tablets (up to 96 tablets only)
- Peptac liquid
- Senna solution
- Senna tablets
- Thickening agents

## Example of a Bulk Prescription

The prescription from the prescriber must include:

- The wording "for patients under my care at [the name of the care home]" rather than a specific person's name
- The date
- The words 'bulk prescription'
- The medicine that is being bulk prescribed
- The total quantity required for all service users on this medication
- The directions may be written as – "to be given in accordance with prescriber's instruction on the MAR chart"

Not all GP computer system can issue bulk prescriptions electronically in which case they will be either handwritten or printed on a regular green FP10 prescription form.

There is no prescription charge when a bulk prescription is dispensed from the pharmacy.

Pharmacy Stamp

Age  
D.o.B.

Name (including forename) and address  
**For patients under  
the care of MLCSU  
Care Home**

By not to stamp over age box

Dispenser's endorsement  
NP

Number of days' treatment  
N.B. Ensure dose is stated  
NP

Pricing Office

Pack & quantity  
**Bulk Prescription**  
**3,000ml Lactulose**

**To be given in  
accordance with GP  
instruction on MAR  
chart.**

Signature of Doctor  
**Dr R Jones**

Date  
**05/05/2020**

For dispenser  
No. of  
Prescrib.  
on form.

NHS PATIENTS - please read the notes overleaf

## Starting Bulk Prescriptions

The care home manager and prescriber agree on which medicines can be bulk prescribed and inform community pharmacy. Ideally the community pharmacist should be part of this discussion.

(Attachment 1 – Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medicines)



The care home manager ensures the staff responsible for ordering and administering medication understand the bulk prescribing process.



For each new service user, medicines must first be prescribed to them individually so that an appropriate MAR is available.



Before ordering, check the quantity already in the care home and the amount required for each service user. Adjust total quantity ordered to prevent excess stock building up or being wasted.



Complete a monthly bulk prescribing order form to send to the practice including:

- Name of service users
- Dose and quantity of medicine they are currently taking
- Estimated current stock level
- Estimated end of month stock level
- Overall total required

(Attachment 2 – Bulk Prescribing Ordering Form)



Keep a copy of order form.



When received, check the prescription and correct any errors with the GP practice.

**Please note that a Bulk Prescription cannot be sent electronically, and would have to be collected from the surgery**



When ordering from the MAR chart inform the community pharmacy that the medicine is still needed but not to be supplied for the individual – you should write 'bulk prescribing' on the MAR chart where you would normally write the quantity needed.



Send the prescription to the community pharmacy with a copy of the bulk prescribing order form making sure to list any stopped or changed doses.

## Receiving Bulk medication from Community Pharmacy

Check the quantity received was the quantity ordered.

The label on the medicine will name the care home and not an individual service user.



Enter the quantity received, check the total already in the stock cupboard and calculate the total quantity of the medicine at the beginning of the cycle.

(Attachment 3 – Sign in Sheet for Bulk Prescribed Medicine).



Check that the MAR charts have the medicine and the correct dose of the bulk prescribed medicine for each service user. Correct any errors with the community pharmacy.



Administer medicine to service user as prescribed on MAR chart.



Regular audits of the medicines returns book will show any avoidable bulk medication waste

(Attachment 4 – Audit Sheet for Bulk Prescribed Medicines)

## Storage

Store the main stock of the bulk medicine in your lockable drug store making sure enough is available for drug rounds.

## Administration

Check the service user's MAR chart and their prescribed dose.



Bulk medicine should only be used when stated on MAR chart.



Select the bulk prescribed medicine – this will be labelled with the care home name and not the individual service user's name.



To avoid unnecessary waste, use the service user's own medication (labelled with their own name) before using the bulk stock.

**Medication labelled with an individual's name must only be administered to that individual, it cannot be shared with other service users.**



Follow the normal care home administration procedure

## Monthly Reordering

The staff member responsible for ordering should check the quantities being administered. Estimate the amount of stock remaining at the end of the month and adjust the total quantity to be ordered to prevent excess stock building up or being wasted.

**(Attachment 2 – Bulk Prescribing Order Form)**



Check the quantity currently in stock and whether any service user has stopped this medicine.

**There must be at least two service users who are still prescribed the bulk medicine when it is re-ordered**



Where the medicine has been stopped by the prescriber, ensure this is recorded appropriately on the service user's MAR and inform the community pharmacy. This can be done using the bulk prescription order form and makes sure the medicine does not appear on the new MAR if the pharmacist is producing them.



A new prescription must be requested for an individual service user if there is any change to the dose of the bulk prescribed medication. Then either the community pharmacy or the care home staff can produce a new MAR sheet. Future prescriptions can then be requested as bulk prescriptions as usual.



Regular audits of the medicines returns book will show any avoidable bulk medication waste.

**(Attachment 4 – Audit sheet For Bulk Prescribed Medicines)**

**Acknowledgment to PrescQIPP bulletin 66; May 2014.2.1 for the attachments used within this document**

## Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medicines

<b>CARE HOME</b>	
<b>MEDICATION</b>	
<b>DRESSINGS (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 service users that are registered from this home under my care.	
<b>PRESCRIBER NAME</b>	
<b>SIGNATURE</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	
I agree to the medicines listed above to be bulk prescribed for the service users at this care home and can confirm that there are at least 20 service users who normally reside with us. We take responsibility to check and order the quantity required each month for all the service users on these medicines and will inform the surgery of any changes.	
<b>REGISTERED NURSE/MANAGER NAME</b>	
<b>SIGNATURE</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	

## Bulk Prescribing Order Form

<b>For the attention of (GP Practice/ Prescriber)</b>		
<b>Service user's name</b>	<b>Dose</b>	<b>Total quantity prescribed for the month</b>
<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>		
<b>Service users whose dose has changed or stopped</b>		
<b>Service user's name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Dose changed or stopped (delete as appropriate)</b>
		Dose changed/stopped
		Dose changed/stopped
		Dose changed/stopped
<b>Care home</b>		
<b>Bulk prescribed medication</b>		
<b>Month</b>		
<b>Signature of staff member</b>		
<b>Print name</b>		
<b>Date</b>		



## Audit Sheet for Bulk Prescribed Medicines

It is advised that an audit should be carried out every three months to check that stocks are being managed appropriately. Discrepancies can occur when carers record 'refused' at administration and it is uncertain whether or not the dose was measured and then destroyed. This happens rarely for 'when required' (prn) doses – more often for regular doses with difficult service users.

All liquid medicines refused should be put into a "waste" bottle labelled "for destruction" and returned to pharmacy for destruction. Refused medicines should not be disposed of in household waste or put down sinks or toilets.

MONTH	
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**ADDITION OF COLUMNS 'E' AND 'G' SHOULD BE EQUAL TO 'B', THE QUANTITY IN STOCK**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Name of drug	Quantity received this month	Quantity already in stock cupboard and trolley at time of audit	Number of service users on bulk lists	Total number of doses recorded as administered	Total volume administered	Total number of doses <b>measured</b> and recorded as refused (NOT PRN)	Total volume measured and refused

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Name of drug	Quantity received this month	Quantity already in stock cupboard and trolley at time of audit	Number of service users on bulk lists	Total number of doses recorded as administered	Total volume administered	Total number of doses <b>measured</b> and recorded as refused (NOT PRN)	Total volume measured and refused

**ADDITION OF COLUMNS 'E' AND 'G' SHOULD BE EQUAL TO 'B', THE QUANTITY IN STOCK**

## Example of letter to Pharmacy

[Insert surgery address]

Date

[Insert pharmacy address]

### Re: Bulk prescribing for service users at our care home

Dear [insert pharmacist name],

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

I can confirm that there are ten or more service users at this care home who are registered with this GP at this surgery and that the Senior Registered nurse in the care home has also agreed to this list of medication.

Bulk medication for [insert name] care home
e.g. Lactulose

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

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

May I also request that the MAR chart for the service users 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 a more efficient and will reduce wastage and I thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

(On Behalf of Dr [insert name])

## Quick Guide to Bulk Prescribing

### Care Home

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

Check 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 and 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 waste

### Prescriber/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

Receive bulk prescribing order form from care home and prescription  
Check criteria for bulk prescribing  
Check quantity requested matches bulk prescription  
Check that the service users listed on the bulk prescribing order form have a record on the computerised MAR chart of the bulk prescribed medication

If providing a MAR chart, ensure specific instructions for this medication are on the MAR chart and indicate the item as a 'Bulk Prescription Item'

Adapted with kind permission from South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw CCG

## References

1. The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2001/3998/regulation/19/made>
2. Controlled drugs: safe use and management, NICE guideline:  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng46>
3. CQC: Nigel's surgery 28: Management of controlled drugs  
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/gps/nigels-surgery-28-management-controlled-drugs>
4. PrescQIPP  
<https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-66-care-homes-bulk-prescribing/>

**This document has been produced for the North West COVID Medicines Cell by Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit (MLCSU) in collaboration with NHSE and local pharmacy leads.**

### Acknowledgements:

Dr Devina Halsall, North West CD Accountable Officer
Helen Pearson (Midlands and Lancashire CSU)
Paula Wilson (Midlands and Lancashire CSU)
Humera Ahmed (Manchester Health and Care Commissioning)
Carolyn Barton (Knowsley CCG)
Kerrie Bermudez (Mersey Care)
Catherine Lee (Mersey Care)
Janine Dyson Lead Nurse, Independent Care Sector, Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership
Janet Kenyon (Cheshire CCG)
Jasmeen Islam (CWP Community Physical Health Services)
Melanie Preston (Fylde Coast CCGs)
GM CCG pharmacists
Dr Liam Hosie/ Dr David Waterman (GMEC Strategic Clinical Network)
Helen Barlow (Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership)
Lucy Reid, Helen Sullivan, Rhian Thomas, Katherine O'Loughlin, Steven King (Halton CCG)
Dr Keith Pearson (Heywood Middleton Rochdale CCGs)
Gavin Mankin (Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS)
Regional Drug & Therapeutics Centre
Abigail Wilkinson (St Helens CCG)
Liz Bailey (Stockport CCG)
Jenny Lunn (Warrington CCG)
Kate Ward (West Lancashire CCG)
Pippa Roberts (Wirral University Teaching Hospital)
Zoe Trumper (Wigan Borough CCG)

Author: MLCSU Medicines Optimisation Team  
Agreed by the NW Medicines and Pharmacy Cell – 6 May 2020  
Agreed by NW Clinical Cell – 8 May 2020  
Review date – to be reviewed as we learn more