

Guidance on Bulk Prescribing for Care Home Patients

Introduction

Many patients in care homes taking medicines “when required” (PRN) can inevitably present problems for the prescriber in determining the quantity to prescribe. Patients in the community can request more when they run out, however, care homes work on a 28 day cycle which is where difficulties arise.

Care homes often have PRN medicines in blister packs, which leads to wastage or even overuse if a PRN medicine is given when it is not needed. It is time-consuming for GP practices to vary quantities on lots of individual prescriptions every month, and this is also the case for care homes. What generally happens is medication is thrown away at the end of the month and a new prescription is ordered. Writing a bulk prescription may resolve some of these issues.

Why was this guidance produced?

Not all GPs are aware of the ability to write bulk prescriptions for patients in residential and nursing care homes. It is recognised that bulk prescribing could provide the following benefits:

- Potential to reduce waste saving money for the NHS – A study commissioned by the Department of Health (DH) in 2009 found £50 million worth of NHS supplied medicines are disposed of unused by care homes
- Reduction of space required in the drug trolley
- Reduces drug round time / pharmacy dispensing time
- Reduces potential for administration error

What is this guidance about?

This guidance gives some general advice on bulk prescribing and provides the tools needed to support the safe and effective implementation of bulk prescribing for those organisations wishing to do so.

What is bulk prescribing?

The issue of a bulk prescription allows the care home staff to use one supply for all residents who are clinically identified as suitable for the prescribed medication rather than named patient supplies.

A bulk prescription is an order for **two or more patients** bearing the name of a care home in which at least **20 persons normally reside**, for the treatment of **at least 10 patients of who are registered with a particular GP practice**.

What medications can be bulk prescribed?

The medication must be prescribed on the NHS and be either:

- A ‘P’ pharmacy medicine – can be bought in a pharmacy or
- A ‘GSL’ product – ‘general sales list’ product that can be bought in a supermarket.

The following medicines are considered suitable for bulk prescribing, the list is not exhaustive and formulary items should always be the first line choice.

Paracetamol 500mg tablets/caplets**	Paracetamol 250mg/5ml <u>SUGAR-FREE</u> oral suspension	The GP and Care Home will agree which medications will be bulk prescribed (APPENDIX 1 - Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medication)
Lactulose solution	Macrogol sachets (Cosmocol, Laxido)	
Bisacodyl 5mg /Senna 7.5mg tablets	Senna solution 7.5mg/5ml oral solution	
Peptac liquid	Thickening agents	

** up to 96 tablets only (quantity greater than this is a POM). Service users taking regular paracetamol are therefore not suitable for bulk prescription.

What cannot be prescribed on a bulk prescription?

A 'POM' – 'Prescription Only Medicines' **cannot** be issued by bulk prescription e.g. antibiotics, blood pressure medication. An FP10 for individual patients needs to be issued for any POM medicine prescribed.

Creams, ointments and topical applications are not considered suitable for bulk prescribing as they cannot be shared between more than one patient.

When is bulk prescribing **NOT** appropriate?

- It is not appropriate for service users who self-medicate to be included in bulk prescribing. In this situation, medicines are stored within a locked facility in the service user's own room. **These medicines MUST NOT be shared.**
- The Royal Pharmaceutical Society for Great Britain recommends bulk prescribing is **NOT** a way of obtaining stock items of homely remedies.

How is a bulk prescription written and what information must it include?

On commencing treatment, **the medication must be prescribed initially on a prescription bearing the service users name.** This will ensure the medicine and specific directions appear on that service user's subsequent MAR charts. This will also evidence that the service user **has been clinically assessed and initially prescribed this medication.** Subsequent prescriptions for each new service user can then be ordered using a bulk prescription. **A copy of the original prescription should be kept in the service users care plan.**

A bulk prescription can be written or printed on an ordinary FP10 prescription

Pharmacist Stamp: [Blank]

Age: 65.5

Name (including forename and address): For patients under my care at Park Grange Care Home

Dispenser's endorsement: NP

Prescribing Office: [Blank]

Quantity: 3000ml

Medicine: Lactulose

Directions: To be given in accordance with GP instruction on MAR chart

Signature of Doctor: Dr R Jones

Date: 10/01/2017

NHS PATIENTS - please read the notes on the back

A bulk prescription should include:

- the name of the care home (instead of the individual name of the service user)
- the date
- the words 'bulk prescription' – to identify the type of prescription
- the medicine that is being bulk prescribed
- the total quantity required for all service users on this medication
- The directions may state "to be given in accordance with GP instruction on the MAR chart".

Due to variation in doses for each service user, the MAR chart will need to provide the dose to be administered.

Bulk Prescribing Implementation Guidance for Care Home Staff

1. Starting bulk prescribing

- Agree list of medicines suitable for bulk prescription with GP (refer to examples of suitable medicines on page 1)
- Decide if service users fit the criteria for bulk prescribing (refer to page 1)
- Care home manager and prescriber discuss and agree on the medicines that can be bulk prescribed in their care home and inform community pharmacy. Ideally the community pharmacist should be part of this discussion process (**Appendix 1 - Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medication**)
- The care home manager must ensure that staff responsible for ordering and administering medication understands the principles of bulk prescribing.
- It is not appropriate for service users who self-medicate to be included in bulk prescribing. In this situation, medicines are stored within a locked facility in the service users own room. These must not be shared.
- The bulk prescription may state “to be given in accordance with GP instruction” although the MAR chart for individual patients should state the prescribed dose.
- Procedures on production of MAR charts need to be agreed locally (e.g. they can be produced by the community pharmacist if that service is offered or written by appropriately qualified staff in the care home.
- Prior to requesting a bulk prescription check current stock. By observing the dose prescribed and administered in the MAR, calculate the amount required for each service user.
- It is suggested that a monthly order form for the bulk prescription is sent to the practice.
(Appendix 2 - Bulk Prescribing Order form)

This should include:

- The medication required for bulk prescription.
- The names of the service users to be included.
- The dose/quantity they are currently taking.
- Estimated current stock level.
- Estimated amount remaining by the end of the month.
- The overall total quantity required on the bulk prescription.

It would be good practice to save a copy of this monthly order for your records.

- As with all prescriptions, the bulk prescription generated by the practice should be checked at the care home **prior** to it going to the community pharmacy - report any discrepancy to the prescriber
- A copy of the monthly order form to be sent to community pharmacy with prescriptions
- When ordering from the MAR chart there needs to be some indication to inform the community pharmacy that **the medicine is still to be continued but not to be supplied for the individual – you should indicate ‘bulk prescribing’ on the MAR chart where you would normally state quantity needed.**

If the MAR chart is not used for ordering, for example, the right-hand side of prescription is used, the monthly order form will inform the community pharmacy of the service users receiving medication by bulk prescription.

2. Receiving the medication from community pharmacy

- Check that the quantity received was the quantity ordered NB: the label on the medicine will identify the care home not the individual service user.
- Enter the quantity received, check the total already in stock cupboard and calculate the total quantity of the drug at the beginning of the cycle. (**Appendix 3 - Care Homes sign in sheet for bulk prescribed medication**)
- Check that the MAR charts have the medicine and the correct current dose of the bulk prescribed medicine for each service user. Report any discrepancy to the community pharmacy.

3. Storage

Store the main stock of the bulk medicine in a lockable storage facility and make a suitable quantity available on the drug trolley for drug rounds.

4. Administration

- Check the service user's MAR chart and the dose prescribed for that individual.
- Bulk medicine should only be used when stated on MAR chart
- Select the bulk prescribed medicine – this will be labelled with the care home not the individual service user.
- To avoid unnecessary medication waste, ensure service users' initial supplies of this medicine (labelled with their own names) are used first before administering from bulk stock. Medication labelled with an individual's name must only be administered to that service user.
- Follow the normal care home administration procedure.
- The GP must be informed of any changes in the patient's condition.

5. Monthly re-ordering

Each month, the staff member responsible for the ordering must check the quantities being administered, estimate the amount remaining by the end of the month and adjust the total quantity to be ordered, if necessary, to prevent excess stock accumulating or being discarded.

(Appendix 2 - Bulk Prescribing Order form)

When re-ordering, the following should be considered:

- The variable dose prescribed, if applicable.
- The quantity being administered to the service users.
- The quantity currently in stock.
- Any service user who has stopped this medication. Where the medicine has been stopped by the prescriber, ensure the service user's MAR is endorsed appropriately and inform the community pharmacist that this person has stopped using the bulk prescription order form. This will ensure the medicine does not appear on the new MAR if the pharmacist is producing the MAR.

NB. There must be at least 2 services users who are still prescribed the particular bulk medicine when it is re-ordered.

- A new prescription must be requested for the individual service user if there is any change to the dose of the bulk prescribed medication. The community pharmacy will then print a new MAR chart (if service offered by community pharmacist) or the care home staff can produce a new MAR chart (procedures to be agreed locally). Subsequent prescriptions can be requested on bulk prescription.

6. Medication Waste Management

To avoid unnecessary medication waste, ensure service users' initial supplies labelled with their own names are used first before administering from bulk stock. Medication labelled with an individual's name must only be administered to that service user.

Regular audit of medication returns book will highlight any avoidable bulk medication returns.

(Appendix 4 – Care Homes Audit for Bulk Prescribed Medication)

It is good practice to audit bulk medication on a quarterly basis.

Bulk Prescribing Implementation Guidance For GP Practice

- Discuss list of medicines suitable for bulk prescription.
 - Decide if service users fit the criteria for bulk prescribing. (Refer to page 1 of guidance)
 - GP and care home manager discuss and agree on medicines that can be bulk prescribed in the care home and inform community pharmacy. (**Appendix 1 - Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medication**) and (**Appendix 5 – Example Community Pharmacy letter**).
 - Agree a system with the care home regarding requests for bulk prescriptions. (**Appendix 3 - Care Homes sign in sheet for bulk prescribed medication**)
 - On commencing treatment, the medication must be prescribed initially on a prescription bearing the service user's name. This will ensure the medicine and specific directions appear on that service user's subsequent MAR charts. An entry must be made on the repeat screen to ensure there is a record of bulk prescribing.
 - Access the service user's computer records and on the selected medication include '**bulk prescription**' to the instructions to identify medication which is supplied as part of bulk prescription (e.g. Lactulose 10ml twice daily - bulk prescription).
 - Bulk prescriptions can either be handwritten or computer generated. The care home name is a requirement on the prescription. To allow computer generated bulk prescriptions to be issued, it is suggested that the practice 'registers' the 'care home name' as an inactive patient. Using this record to issue all bulk prescriptions for that care home ensures a chronological record of items issued for audit purposes.
 - If the above process is not used, and bulk prescriptions are handwritten there must be an alternative method of recording. A record of the bulk prescription must be logged at the practice either via
 - Entry on the care home's 'inactive patient' record
 - Entering details onto each service users computer record
- NB. Handwritten scripts are not recommended as it is not possible to mitigate against risks of information not getting onto the patient record.**
- Ensure the Bulk Prescribing Order form (Appendix 2) is retained by the practice for audit purposes e.g. the practice may choose to scan this order form into the care home record. This will duplicate the MAR chart information regarding which patients have been given the bulk item during the preceding month.
 - A new prescription must be generated for the individual service user if there is any change to the dose of the bulk prescribed medication. Subsequent prescriptions can be requested on bulk prescription.
 - Ensure reception staff are aware of the bulk prescribing process.
 - Amend the repeat prescribing protocol to include bulk prescribing.

Additional guidance for SystmOne

- On repeat template set a script note '*on bulk prescribing system*' –this will then print the message on the prescription and the repeat slip
- Also, tick '*irregularly issued template*' and untick '*patient initiate issues*'
- There is no READ code for Bulk Prescribing so READ code XaJr2 '*other medicines management to be able to run reports*
- Type in '*bulk prescribing*' as extra explanation under this read code

Bulk Prescribing Implementation Guidance for Community Pharmacy

- Ensure dispensary staff are aware of principles of bulk prescribing.
- Agree a system with the care home regarding requests for bulk prescriptions.
- **On commencing treatment, the medication must be prescribed initially on a prescription bearing the service user's name. This will ensure the medicine and specific directions appear on that service user's subsequent MAR charts.** (It is at the pharmacist's discretion whether a MAR chart is supplied as this is not a contractual requirement.)
- Subsequent prescriptions for each new service user can then be ordered using a bulk prescription.
- Ensure a letter has been received from the GP identifying the care home, patients and medication that will have bulk prescribing (**Appendix 5 – Example Community Pharmacy letter**).
- Ensure the list of medicines prescribed is suitable for bulk prescription.
- Check the bulk prescription writing standards (Refer to page 1 and 2 of guidance)
- Check bulk prescription monthly order form from the care home:
 - Check agreed medication list for bulk prescribing (**Appendix 1 - Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medication**).
 - Check quantity requested matches bulk prescription.
 - Check that the service users listed on the bulk prescribing monthly order form have a record of the bulk prescribed medication on the MAR chart.
 - Confirm any discrepancies with care home/ prescriber.
 - While service user requires medication on bulk prescription, if supplying MAR chart, print the medication and direction to allow endorsement of administration to be made.
 - Indicate medication is bulk prescribed on MAR chart.
 - Bulk prescriptions are submitted to the Business Services Authority as normal.
- There is no prescription charge for a bulk prescription.

Acknowledgements and references

NHS Drug Tariff (Sept 2016)

PrescQIPP Bulletin 66 May 2014; Implementing bulk prescribing for care home patients.

Sheffield CCG; Guidance on Bulk Prescribing for Care Home Patients

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medication

Appendix 2 – Bulk prescribing order form

Appendix 3 – Care Homes sign in sheet for bulk prescribed medication

Appendix 4 – Care Homes Audit for Bulk Prescribed Medication

Appendix 5 – Example community Pharmacy Letter

Quick guide to bulk prescribing (Page 14)

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Guidance approved by:

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APPENDIX 1 - Agreed List of Bulk Prescribed Medication

CARE HOME	
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MEDICATION	AGREED
<i>e.g. Lactulose Oral Solution</i>	✓
Paracetamol 500mg Tablets/Caplets **	
Paracetamol 250mg/5ml SUGAR FREE Oral Suspension	
Bisacodyl 5mg tablets / Senna 7.5mg Tablets	
Senna 7.5mg/5ml SUGAR FREE Oral Solution	
Lactulose Oral Solution	
Laxido (Macrogol) Sachets	
Peptac Liquid (500ml)	
Thickening Agents (Resource Thicken Up Clear (125g)/Thick and Easy (225g/4.45kg))	

** up to 96 tablets/caplets only (quantity greater than this is a POM – Prescription Only Medicine. Service users taking regular paracetamol are therefore not suitable for bulk prescription)

AUTHORISATION	
I authorise the medicines listed above to be bulk prescribed for this care home and I can confirm that there are 10 or more residents that are registered from this home under my care.	
GP NAME:	
SIGNATURE:	
DATE:	
I agree to the medicines listed above to be bulk prescribed for the patients at this care home and can confirm that there are at least 20 persons who normally reside with us. We take responsibility to check and order the quantity required each month for all the patients on these medicines and will inform the surgery of any changes.	
REGISTERED NURSE NAME:	
SIGNATURE:	
DATE:	

APPENDIX 2 - Bulk Prescribing Order form

CARE HOME:	
BULK PRESCRIBED MEDICATION:	
MONTH:	

FOR THE ATTENTION, OF [Insert surgery name]:	
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SERVICE USER'S NAME	DOSE	TOTAL QUANTITY PRESCRIBED FOR THE MONTH
TOTAL		
CURRENT STOCK LEVEL		
ESTIMATED AMOUNT REMAINING BY THE END OF THIS CYCLE		
TOTAL REQUIRED ON A BULK PRESCRIPTION		

SIGNATURE OF STAFF MEMBER:	
PRINT NAME:	
DATE:	

Example

SERVICE USER'S NAME	DOSE	TOTAL QUANTITY PRESCRIBED FOR THE MONTH
<i>Service user A</i>	<i>10ml BD</i>	<i>560ml</i>
<i>Service user B</i>	<i>15ml BD</i>	<i>840ml</i>
<i>Service user C</i>	<i>10ml BD</i>	<i>280ml</i>
<i>Service user D</i>	<i>10ml BD</i>	<i>560ml</i>
<i>Service user E</i>	<i>10ml BD</i>	<i>560ml</i>
TOTAL		2800ml
CURRENT STOCK LEVEL		1700ml
ESTIMATED AMOUNT REMAINING BY THE END OF THIS CYCLE		300ml
TOTAL REQUIRED ON A BULK PRESCRIPTION		2500ml

APPENDIX 5 – Example Community Pharmacy letter

[Insert surgery address]

Date

[Insert pharmacy address]

Re: Bulk prescribing for our care homes patients

Dear [insert pharmacist name],

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

I can confirm that there are ten or more patients 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
<i>e.g. Lactulose</i>

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

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

May I also request that the MAR chart for the patients that have a bulk prescribed item states 'from bulk supply' [delete if pharmacist not completing MAR charts]

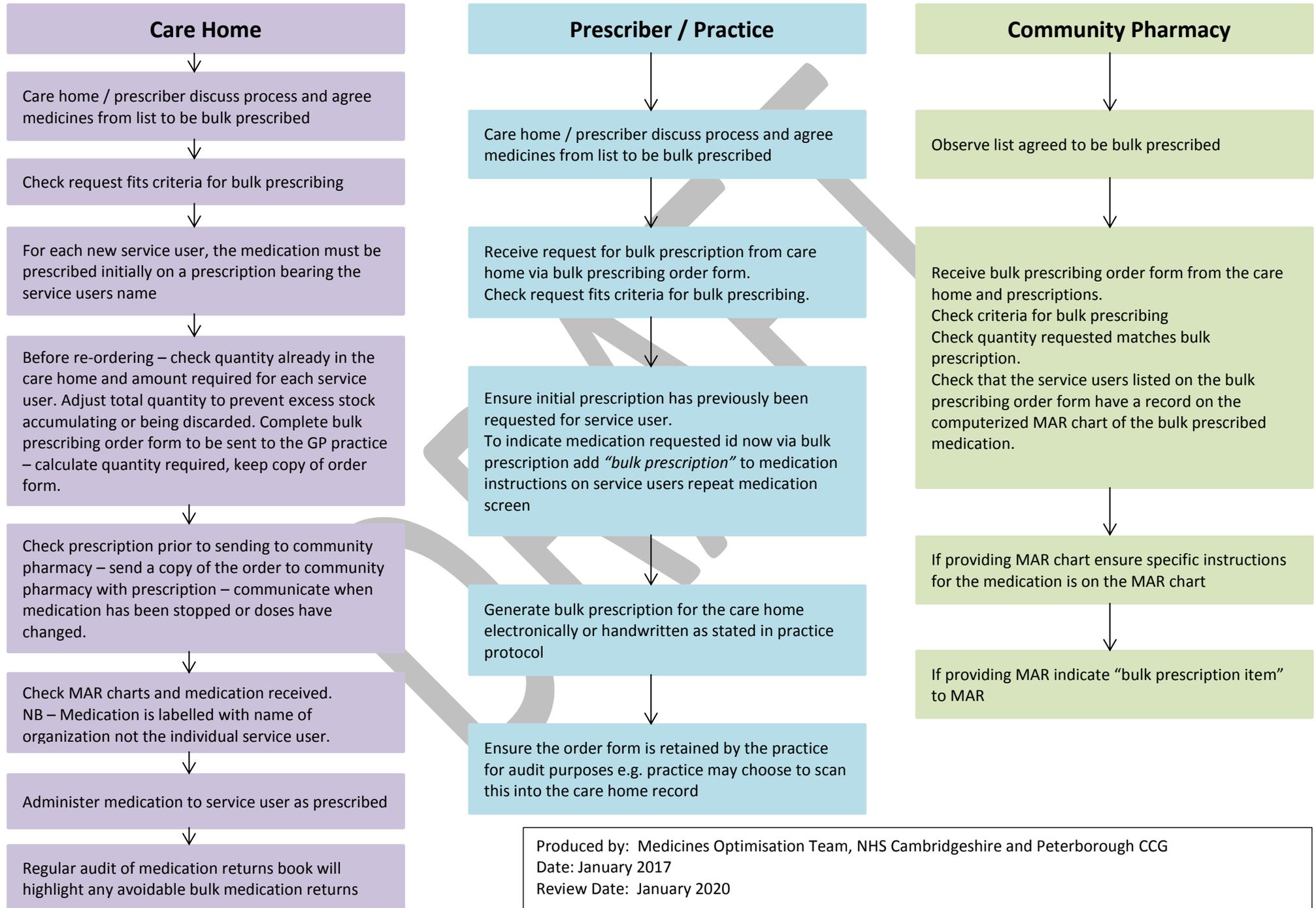
If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact [insert name] at the surgery, who will be happy to assist you.

I hope that you will find this process 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



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